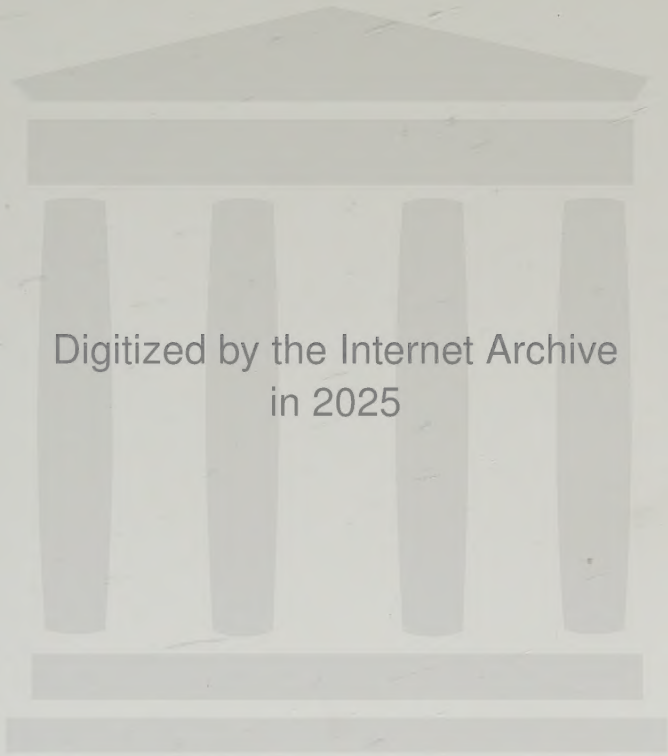
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE LIFE AND TRAGEDY OF ALEXANDRA FEODOROVNA EMPRESS OF RUSSIA

With an introduction by J. C. SQUIRE

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FOURTEEN MONTHS IN SIBERIA DURING THE REVOLUTION

DECEMBER 1917—FEBRUARY 1919

BY

BARONESS SOPHIE BUXHOEVEDEN

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PREFACE

IN the pages that follow I have described the fourteen months that I spent in Siberia from December 1917 to February 1919. I was not able to write much to my father, even in the beginning, and later on not at all, so that I got into the habit of noting down the events I witnessed and my impressions of people and places. I hoped to be able to send these notes to him when postal communications should be regular again and letters no longer liable to be intercepted and a different construction put on even the most harmless epistle. I have now added some details to my notes and also some general information about my surroundings and companions.

The picture I have striven to give is that of life in abnormal times and under exceptional conditions. It is not the picture of a Siberia as it was just before the war, when it was beginning to realise the vastness of its own resources, nor of the Siberia that I earnestly hope will come into being some day. Nor are the people I describe to be taken as typical of Siberians of every day in the big cities.

Siberia was, and probably will always be, a land of contrasts. There was advanced culture in some places, while in the distant towns the civilisation was that of at least eighty years ago. The country is so immense, the means of communication so

inadequate, that new inventions as well as new ideas took time to penetrate into the backwoods.

I must here note with deep gratitude that in these troublous times I met with the utmost kindness, shown, often at great personal danger to themselves, by people whom I had never seen before and will probably never meet again. I cannot say enough for the generosity and goodness of Siberians of every standing.

Danger and hardship and the fact of having led a real working life with all that this entails have made me richer by giving me a fuller understanding of my fellows and by helping me to appreciate the point of view of other classes of society. If I have seen humanity at its worst—cruelty, hatred, and murder all surging in a chaos of untrammelled passion—I have also seen it at its best—kindness, unselfishness, and real charity.

This I always bear in mind when I remember my Siberian wanderings and my last year in my own country.

I tender my very best thanks to the kind friends who have lent me some of their photographs, as well as to *L'Illustration*, and to Madame Maria Bogdanova for permission to reproduce the group of the Imperial Family, which has appeared in her editions.

SOPHIE BUXHOEVEDEN.

BRUSSELS,
December 1928.

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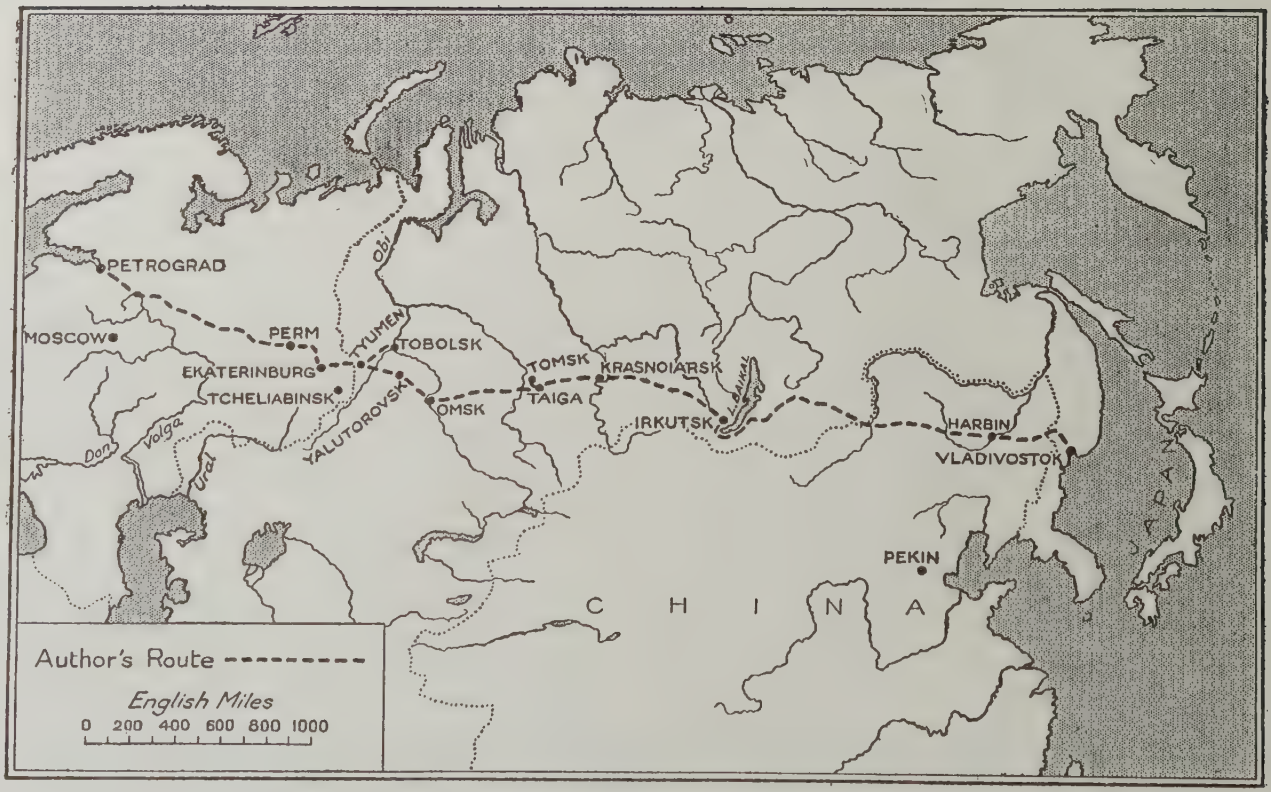
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CHAPTER I

IN THE TRANS-SIBERIAN

HAD I been told in January 1917 that the year would see me an exile in Siberia, completely cut off from my people, penniless, drifting from place to place, often in fear of my life, I should have thought the idea preposterous. I was at that time lady-in-waiting to the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna of Russia and was living with the Imperial Family at the Tsarskoe Selo Palace. I had many friends and no material anxieties. My parents were in Denmark, where my father was the Russian Minister. My busy life was pleasant, the Empress and her daughters were wonderfully kind to me. My two colleagues, the other ladies-in-waiting, were real friends. Though during the preceding two years rumours of smouldering political unrest in the country had added to the anxieties and suspense caused by the war, the approach of a tragedy unparalleled in history did not seem possible.

In March 1917 the Russian revolution broke out and the Emperor abdicated, and for five months, as a voluntary State prisoner, I shared the Imperial Family's imprisonment at the Tsarskoe Selo Palace. When the Kerensky Government decided to remove

the Emperor and his family to "an unknown destination," which proved to be Tobolsk in Siberia, I was unable to accompany them, as I had to undergo an operation for appendicitis. I managed, however, to extract a promise from the authorities that I might join the Imperial Family on my recovery.

My convalescence lasted longer than was expected, but at last the day came when I could make preparations to start on my long journey. I little knew how long, nor how uncomfortable it was to be. In any case this was to me a matter of indifference, as my one desire was to rejoin the Emperor and Empress in their captivity. It took weeks to get the necessary permits to allow me to leave Petrograd at all. I obtained the final papers from the Kerensky Government on the very last day of its existence. On the next, November 7, the Bolshevik revolution broke out. This stopped all railway communication for several weeks and rendered my journey more difficult and even dangerous. The papers I had got with such trouble were no longer valid and I had no hope of obtaining others from the Bolsheviks, who would certainly have arrested me had I shown myself to them. My journey to Tobolsk had therefore to be a secret undertaking, for the Bolsheviks would have been quick to suspect a Monarchist plot if they heard of people going out to join the deposed Emperor. The Kerensky Government was still recognised in Siberia, and I knew that once I got there the permits I had would still hold good.

I was accompanied on my journey by my faithful old friend Miss A. D. Mather. She had been my mother's friend and companion since her earliest girlhood, and as soon as my nursery days were over she became my governess and was like a second mother to me. Miss Mather had stayed with my parents in Copenhagen after I left Russia to become

the Empress's lady-in-waiting, and now, my mother having died, had come to Petrograd to be with me during my operation. She was a wonderful woman, always keeping her own distinct individuality in any surroundings, and the most true and understanding of friends. I tried to suggest to her that neither the journey to Siberia nor conditions of life there were suitable for a foreigner, especially to a woman of sixty, but she brushed aside all my objections. I could not go on such a journey alone, and if I went she would go with me. The way in which this quiet little old Scotch lady adapted herself to the most difficult situations was little short of marvellous. Though she was slight and delicate-looking she had an iron determination and perfect self-command. She held her own before even the fiercest Bolshevik, never letting herself be hampered by her very bad Russian. Her keen sense of humour helped her to see the worst trials in the light of an amusing adventure and she would not allow herself to dwell too longingly on the thought of her beloved Scotland. Naturally the comfort of her sympathetic presence meant all the difference in the world to me.

In order not to disclose my identity, an acquaintance in Petrograd kindly volunteered to get us some railway tickets, and one evening in December he actually brought me three sleeping-car vouchers for next day. He had got them with much difficulty, and each was issued for a different town far up on the Trans-Siberian line, for, on his advice, in order to disarm suspicion, Miss Mather and my maid were to pretend to be fellow-travellers meeting by chance. We hurriedly made our last preparations and on the momentous day arrived at the station, separately, in accordance with the parts we had to play. The Petrograd station was in a state of indescribable chaos. As soon as passenger trains were

run again, all those who could possibly do so fled from Petrograd to the provinces where Bolshevik rule was not as yet generally recognised. All time-tables had been done away with, and every traveller, with his family and all his belongings, sat for long hours in the waiting-room till the train he intended to go by eventually started. In these democratic times there were of course no porters. Some brave souls, who had risked being compromised by associating with us, had come to see us off, and they lent a willing hand. There was great difficulty in getting into the train at all, for the current axiom that " might is right " was applied here. When the signal to leave was given a general stampede took place. All the passengers rushed on to the platform and into the train, each one taking up at least twice the room he should have done, for all had to carry for themselves the numberless bags and bundles of which my travelling countrymen are so fond. Luckily some eventually got out again. They did not intend to go to Siberia at all and had only forced their way into the carriages in order to inquire about the train's destination. There was an awful moment when we three were finally settled in a compartment of the Trans-Siberian. A sailor, now evidently a high railway official, came to look through our papers. (No one was allowed to leave Petrograd at the time without special permit.) He seemed to belong to the crew of the Imperial yacht and might have recognised me, but luckily it was quite dark in the carriage and he was so much absorbed in Miss Mather's papers and studied her English passport so intently that he had no time to look at mine. It was fortunate, for this document was my old diplomatic passport with the Imperial arms and Monsieur Sazonoff's own signature !

The journey to Tyumen, the junction for Tobolsk, was supposed to take four days. Thence we were to

have a drive of two hundred miles to Tobolsk itself. Our expectations were doomed to bitter disappointment, as the railway journey alone was to last nine days! This was the last month during which the "Trans-Siberian de luxe" was run, and even now nothing in the train's appearance conveyed the idea of luxury. All the coverings of the seats had been ripped off by our predecessors for their private use. In order to prevent the horsehair from appearing, dirty canvas covering had replaced the plush. Many of the windows were broken, all the brass bolts were missing, the water in the dressing-room did not run, and the whole carriage had evidently seen much ill-treatment.

After the train had started, a man in ragged clothes who proved to be the guard brought us a candle as a great luxury! By its light we discovered that we had a fourth occupant of our compartment in the shape of a lean young man with a strong likeness to Maxim Gorky. He wore a peasant's black shirt and high boots, a style of dress much affected in those times, and was deep in a number of one of the most extreme Communistic dailies. At first he scowled at us from behind his paper, but though civility was certainly not the fashion then, he gradually unbent and offered to take one of the upper berths. Owing to the difficulty of leaving the compartment he spent the greater part of the journey on the top of his shelf, reading his papers, the violence of whose opinions he seemed to appreciate. "Good stuff, this," we heard him remark. "This is strongly put." He lived on stale black bread which he extracted from a nondescript bundle, and most obligingly got out from time to time at the stations to fill our huge kettle with hot water. People versed in Siberian travel had made us invest in this, and it was a boon, as for many days we had to live mainly on tea.

When we left Petrograd there were only a few passengers sitting in the corridors. (Every compartment was, of course, over-filled.) The next morning, however, at Vologda, where the Moscow line joins the Siberian, the train was literally stormed by soldiers returning from the front. These men had left their units without the sanction of any authority. The army was in full dissolution. After the revolution of March 1917 a violent pacifist propaganda had been carried on in the trenches, and after the November upheaval the last vestiges of discipline had disappeared. The men swarmed in, carrying the most extraordinary luggage of every kind of article crammed into canvas bags and pillow-cases, or made up into bundles. They completely blocked up the corridors, and sat not only on the end platforms of the coaches but on the buffers. They clung to the steps outside, sat and stood in the dressing-rooms and, in short, pervaded everything, filling the carriages with the noise of their brawls. They were nearly all the class of soldier that we had seen in the streets of Petrograd during the last months. Their luggage showed what their occupation had been. They were carrying all the loot they had amassed during their stay in the capital, as well as all the firearms that they had been able to take with them on leaving the front. Out of their bundles protruded brass candlesticks, china, pieces of stuff, as well as every possible kind of weapon. In addition some of them carried one or two rifles under their arms, and at every man's belt hung a revolver or a dagger, or a couple of hand grenades. Among them were a few of a milder appearance, poor fellows, wounded or maimed, who were being invalided home from some hospital. These kept away as much as they could from the others, and stood silently huddled together, shoulder to shoulder, like sheep in a pen, for long hours at a stretch. Soon the men in the

corridors forced themselves into the compartments. Luckily for us, we had only some of the wounded soldiers in ours, and even these left us in the course of the night.

On the second morning we reached Viatka, and after this travelled on at a snail's pace, losing and gaining hundreds of passengers at every station. At each stop the soldiers rushed out in a body to throw themselves on the food stalls, which displayed more and more provisions as we got further from Petrograd. Other soldiers forced their way in, and many of those who got out were never able to return. This was nearly my own fate. I too got out to buy some bread, and when I tried to force my way back into the carriage I found it was utterly impossible. Dozens of men were already clinging to the steps and showed no inclination to make way. My travelling companions and all my belongings, including my papers, were inside and it was vital for me not to be parted from them. One of the men suggested that I should be helped "up," as "a few fellows were already up there." I did not quite realise what "up there" meant and was not a little horrified when I found myself being hoisted by obliging hands on to the roof of the carriage! Here two soldiers were already reclining. I clamoured to be taken down, but the train had started and I had just to cling to the ventilator with all my might. The slowness of the train's progress was my salvation. Its rate was about sixteen miles an hour, but it seemed to me an endless time before we reached the next station. The carriage roof was domed and slippery. I sat astride the ventilator, clinging on with both hands, but at every curve of the line I felt I was gliding off. Luckily we passed under no bridges and it was only about zero F., a mild temperature for those parts. My two travelling companions gave me useful advice, but seemed to think

me hopeless as a roof-traveller! It was they who asked their comrades to help me to get inside the train, saying with a friendliness born of having shared the same plight, "We must get her down or we shall lose her on the way." My relief at being once more inside our carriage can be imagined. I must honestly own that I had never been so much frightened in my life. I had always been particularly bad at gymnastics of any kind, and I believe it was sheer desperation that enabled me to overcome the awful giddiness caused by my "exalted" position.

Between Viatka and Perm we locked our door at night against the invasion of newcomers, for the last contingent seemed specially militant. Eventually they hammered loudly on the doors of all the shut compartments, demanding an entrance and threatening "death to the *bourgoui*." Some of the travellers opened the doors of their compartments, and the number of occupants was immediately increased to such an incredible extent that every one had, literally, a soldier sitting on his or her knee. On the advice of our "Gorky" we four pretended to snore loudly, to make the men outside think that the place was full of heavy sleepers. Happily they did not break open the door to investigate, and contented themselves with banging on the panels, shouting "Wake up, *bourgoui*!" alternating this with threats of hanging, murder, etc., the whole seasoned with the most forceful language. Next morning, when we tried to get out we found to our horror that this was an utter impossibility. The door was completely jammed by the compact mass of soldiers standing shoulder to shoulder in the corridor, and the handle could not be moved more than an inch or so. We had to remain prisoners in our coupé for nearly twenty-four hours, reduced for food to the young man's black bread, and for drink to some tea I had in a thermos flask.

We were beginning to get uneasy as to how the journey would end, when an incident occurred which seemed at first alarming, but which turned out better than we expected. The principles of equality now in force insisted that no one train could travel faster than any other. Ours was still officially an express—the extra fare being scrupulously charged—but had to crawl along at a snail's pace, as the military train in front of it objected to being outstripped. This greatly irritated our *tovaristchi* (comrade soldiers), who sent a message to our engine-driver, threatening to shoot him if he did not increase his speed. He pointed out that there was a train just ahead, and this pacified the soldiers for a time, though they made up their minds to overtake their rival at the very first opportunity. In that land of freedom everyone considered that he had the right to regulate the movements of trains as well as of everything else.

The welcome opportunity arose very soon. The engine of the military train broke down and it had to stop at a station for a new one. On board this train was a detachment of Cossacks who had, wonderfully enough, kept some spirit of discipline and military tradition. For some private reason of their own they sounded a bugle which seemed acutely to irritate the nerves of our fellow-travellers. After a short discussion they made up their minds that the Cossacks were "old regime." Their new engine could be requisitioned as a punishment for their political opinions, and two engines would ensure an increase of speed to our train. This was no sooner said than done. Our soldiers poured out on to the platform, and while one party rushed towards the coveted engine, the other invaded the station-master's office in order to force him to give the necessary orders for the change. When the Cossacks realised what was going to be done they also got out of their train.

Soon the sounds of shouting and of violent altercations filled the air. The Cossacks crowded round their engine, vehemently protesting against giving it up. The other party retaliated by unearthing several machine-guns from their baggage and prepared for battle. A bugle was again sounded, with the result that a stream of Cossacks with rifles in hand poured out of the carriages to reinforce their comrades. Things seemed to be getting serious. Travellers "with experience of such incidents" tried to let down the windows, but these were frozen and jammed. This, it was explained to us, was a necessary precaution, for fear we should be cut by the splinters of glass when the firing began. Luckily, just as the signal for the first volley was given, our train began unexpectedly to move. Some of the soldiers had profited by the preparations for the fight to couple the much-desired engine on to our train. A terrible scurry ensued. A few of the men managed to jump in, but to our great joy the majority remained at the station. The corridors were less packed. We could at last get out of our compartment, though it was still difficult and elicited many oaths from the soldiery.

The Cossack incident was the theme of conversation and discussion all through the following day, and the *bourgoui* and their numerous crimes and defects were happily forgotten.

The soldiers' conversation was most instructive and gave an insight into their mentality at the time. One man, for instance, a real Bolshevik type, with abundant locks in picturesque disorder—a style of coiffure much admired in the Red Army—lamented loudly that most of his luggage had remained at the station where the Cossack incident had taken place. "*This* is my reward for having tired myself out beating the station-master," he said. "My arm is quite sore." The statement was received as a perfectly lawful

grievance by his hearers, and was the cause of much sympathy. On the whole the mood of our travelling companions had improved. The most riotous element had remained at the momentous station and physical fatigue had quenched the warlike spirit of the rest. They profited by the increase of space to lie down, one on top of the other, wherever they could. They laid on the floors of the compartments and in the corridors; some even got on to the luggage racks. Many had come all the great distance from Poland and had probably travelled the whole way in the same conditions. They were so tired that they slept anywhere, standing, sitting on the ground, on their bags, never seeming even to feel their comrades when they stepped on them in trying to squeeze past.

For a long time I had noticed one man who was especially haggard and weary-looking. He had apparently stood out in the cold on the end platform for six whole days. He looked ill, his coat was old and tattered and his boots were worn out. He had no large bundles of loot and ate only dry bread washed down with a glass of tea when some of the others thought fit to ask him to join them at their meals. Silent and immovable, he leaned against the wall, the picture of patient misery. The others laughed at him, calling him the "lunatic" when he did not take part in their talk. I asked him why he was standing out in the cold, now that there was more room in the corridor. "I don't mind," he answered, "there will be an end to it soon. But I will not be with 'them'"—jerking his thumb in the direction of the others. "They are 'possessed.' Nothing is sacred to them, and I would rather freeze than listen to their talk. I advise you, too, to keep clear of them. They have no conscience, they are evil men." So he remained aloof, and I always remember his plain, pock-pitted face, the patient look

of the old Russian soldier in his eyes, and the sadness of the battlefield that seemed to be stamped all over him. He was certainly one of those who had really fought for his country during those tragic years, and not, like the rest, a product of the revolution.

The last two days of our train journey were uneventful. The crowded carriages had, in a way, proved a blessing to us, as they had prevented any examination of our papers by Kommissars on the way. Even Kommissars could not force themselves into the trains and no demand was made for our papers, which would have disclosed the object of our journey and would probably have led to our arrest. Now we were out of the zone of acute danger. After we had passed Ekaterinburg, the first town in the Ural region, the weather became milder and the window-panes clear again. We were able to see the scenery, wide expanses of forest covering the slopes and gradually rising towards the Ural Mountains. We passed somewhere the well-known pillar on one side of which is inscribed " Europe " and on the other " Asia." We were at last in Siberia, that vast part of Russia so little known even to many Russians, where is found every kind of climate from the Polar cold to Southern heat in the Altai regions, and where advanced civilisation exists side by side with the primitive conditions of old-world life.

CHAPTER II

BY SLEIGH TO TOBOLSK

WE arrived at Tyumen, our destination, late at night. This was the end of our railway journey. At any other time we should have been appalled by the household arrangements of what was, by courtesy, styled an hotel; but after the experiences of that journey we were prepared to put up with anything. Tyumen, too, was a land of Canaan to inhabitants of Petrograd, where all foodstuffs had been rationed for several months, and we saw the famished travellers throwing themselves like hungry beasts on the masses of white bread, cold roast game, and sausages that peasant women sold in booths at the station. Though we behaved, I hope, with greater decorum, how we too enjoyed our first meal at that Tyumen hotel!

Here we found real home-baked bread and buns, caviare, delicious sterlet soup, game—and all at a price that no one had heard of in the capital for years! The keeper of the inn—for to tell the truth his establishment deserved no finer name—was a retired Polish colonel who had been wounded in the war. He was the type of the Polish officer of olden days—gallant to the ladies, and constantly executing a series of courtly bows and slides that had about them a vague flavour of the mazurka. The poor man was reduced by hard times to be not only innkeeper but also his own head waiter and chef—and a most excellent one he

was! The hotel was clean—so much could be said for it; but to us, unused as we were to the ways of Siberia, there was much that was strange. It came as a shock, for instance, to discover that we were supposed to bring our own bedding! My maid and I had to sleep on rugs on the floor, as there was only one available bed with a mattress, and this I insisted on leaving to Miss Mather. *One* sheet had been unearthed in the establishment, and this was obligingly given to us, and we were also supplied with the colonel's own pillow-slips. Washing arrangements were of the most primitive order. In one of the corridors of the hotel was a kind of three-legged table, on which was a pail with a spout out of which flowed a very small quantity of water, and visitors were supposed to use this for their ablutions. It was a sociable arrangement, as all those who passed had a full view of their neighbour's toilet; but the washing of our fellow-guests seemed to be of a somewhat summary nature. Happily, for the sake of public hygiene, the Russian steam bath on Saturdays is a generally recognised institution.

As a concession to Miss Mather's nationality we managed to obtain a washing-stand for private use in our room. Otherwise we found the place not uncomfortable for the couple of days we had to stay in it, and quite warm.

We had to be very cautious with the people we met, for though the Bolsheviks were not in the majority at Tyumen, yet there were many of them about. Still, as the Siberians are exceedingly friendly, one or two of our fellow-guests took great interest in us without even asking for our names. One of these was a stout and cheerful-looking merchant's widow, whose ample means were emphasised by the lovely diamond combs that seemed permanently to adorn her very aggressive wig, not quite in keeping,

perhaps, with the flowing red flannel dressing-gown and carpet slippers in which she spent the best part of the day. Though neither she nor the colonel had the faintest idea of our antecedents, they both went out of their way to help us in making arrangements for our further journey, and in fitting us out for it suitably.

The kindness of the merchant's widow even extended to accompanying me on a shopping expedition. I wish I could myself have seen the ridiculous sight my new friend and I must have presented on this occasion. In order to underline her importance in the eyes of the tradesmen, my companion wore a rich cloak of scarlet velvet, lined and trimmed with sable, while her head was swathed rather incongruously in many layers of grey knitted shawl, probably chosen so as not to disturb the diamond combs, which, being of the Spanish persuasion, would have been in the way of a hat. She occupied three-quarters of a small sledge, and I did my best to balance myself on the remainder.

She was a competent adviser in the selection of hay to fill the bags on which we were to recline during the journey, of rugs of thick felt of the kind the nomads use for tents, which were to cover us in our sledges, and of numerous articles of which I had never heard, but which she assured me were indispensable to Siberian travel. She also made arrangements for the hiring of the post horses, being very particular about our getting safe drivers, as not all were to be trusted.

For my part I was greatly disappointed at being unable to hire a car. The people at the post station told me politely that they had heard there were such things in Petrograd and Moscow, but that no one had ever seen a car in those parts. I finally hired two conveyances—a *vozok*, a kind of closed carriage on

runners, with no seat inside and no windows except a tiny round opening in front; and an open sledge for my maid.

At the last moment, before we started on our two hundred miles' drive, two rather unprepossessing-looking soldiers appeared and, as they were also bound for Tobolsk, asked to be allowed to share the maid's sledge. I did not altogether enjoy the idea of their company, but as the post had been robbed by highwaymen a few days previously, I supposed that after all they might be useful if we should be attacked; and as the colonel seemed very dubious about ladies undertaking the journey by themselves, I agreed that they might come with us.

We started early on the morning of January 1, 1918. It was a bright, sunny day, not too cold, 4° F. below zero. Our costumes were marvellous. Before we left Petrograd my friends had supplied me with everything they considered suitable for a northern journey, and the result was a heterogeneous collection of clothing that must have produced a somewhat startling effect. Over my sealskin I wore a huge reindeer-skin coat lined with fox, which had belonged to my uncle, and which trailed on the ground when I walked. My feet were encased in immense felt boots, lent me for this journey by a very tall Grand Duke. Inside these whole haystacks had been put in order to enable me to walk in them. On my head I wore an aviator's fur-lined helmet, also much too large, which practically covered my face. Miss Mather had three layers of coats of different sizes and different stuffs, and wound around her head a large plaid of Royal Stuart tartan. This had great success among the Bolsheviks, who supposed it to indicate a line of political thought in accordance with their own!

We soon discovered that a drive in a *vozok* could not be looked upon in the light of a joy-ride. The

small opening in front, though it was a wise precaution against the cold, allowed but little light to filter in. The smell of goats emanating from the felt rugs, combined with the terrible jolting as we bumped along the frozen ruts, reminded us of experiences on the high seas. Most of the road, at the best, was only thinly covered with snow, which in Siberia is quite dry and as fine as dust. Sheets of this light snow are blown hither and thither by the wind, so that often, whilst on one side of the road it lies many feet deep, on the other the ground may be bare. On account of this snow-storms are a terrible danger. The whole plain seems to move and shift, and if it were not for the lines of cut pine trees stuck up on both sides of the road the way would be difficult to keep. Notwithstanding all precautions people are often lost in the drifts in the depth of winter.

It did not take us long to leave Tyumen behind us, and our Jehu, a very fierce-looking Tartar who did not understand a word of Russian, tore across the snowy plains as fast as his three small sturdy horses could carry us. He whistled to them incessantly and from time to time gave vent to weird shrieks, probably for special encouragement. All this noise seemed to be understood by the horses, who carried us nearly as fast as our train had done. The driver's shouts and the clanging of the big bells which every horse wore round its neck, to act as a signal in a snow-storm, were most irritating at first; but soon, tired out as I was, I began to drowse. My dreams took me back to Tsarskoe and to my former life. I seemed to be in the Empress's sitting-room. I saw its pale green furniture and familiar pictures. The Empress's tall, stately figure walked in, and I saw the kindly smile which so wonderfully lit up her somewhat cold and severe beauty. I seemed to hear her voice addressing me, when an awful jolt woke me with.

a start. I saw the reality—no palace, no Empress, but instead Siberia, and myself, a voluntary exile, going to join State prisoners in this desolate land.

The Siberian scenery, as I saw it on this journey, seemed to consist of endless snow-plains without human habitation, dotted here and there with dark and gloomy woods. The villages were at great distances from each other; at first there were some fifteen miles between them, then twenty-five or thirty! Their wooden houses were larger and more prosperous than those with us in Russia. The Siberian peasant is, generally speaking, a small landowner. Most of them own a number of acres of very fertile land, and each one has several horses, cows and sheep. Their cottages have three or four rooms and are much better furnished than those of the average Russian peasant. There is a mixture of old and new times both in the mentality and in the mode of living of the Siberian peasant. It comes as a surprise to see perfect electric light in a village some two hundred miles from the nearest railway station, and at the same time to find beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery that pertain to the eighteenth century.

Scarcely any land in Siberia proper belonged to the nobility. Indeed there were only six landed proprietors who were not of the peasant class in the whole of the Government of Tobolsk for instance, though it covers a greater surface than France, and their estates were not large. Vast expanses of country were, however, owned by the State. Tartar villages alternate with the others, distinguishable from afar by the minarets of their mosques, sharply outlined against the clear horizon, though the villagers themselves do not look different from the rest of the population. The Tartars were the first Siberian settlers. They were always a free people (they have never been serfs), and the Empress Catharine II in the seventeenth

century granted vast stretches of land to them in order to induce them to emigrate. Land was cheap then, and their allotments were much larger than those granted to the Russian settlers who followed. The Tartars are sober and industrious and belong to the wealthiest part of the population, but as a whole the Siberian peasants give the impression of greater prosperity and culture than do their brethren beyond the Urals. To the fact that they have never been serfs may be attributed the people's dignity of carriage and independence of speech and opinion. Those I met disapproved for the most part of the new ideas. They were landowners, and felt that there was danger to property in what was being preached, though events in Petrograd did not affect them much. The Tsar to them was an exalted being, but as the proverb said: "It is high to God and far to the Tsar." He did not enter into their everyday life, and his deposition consequently did not touch a vital chord. They felt that there ought to be a head to the Government, but were more acutely troubled by the local disorganisation, which they too were beginning to feel.

"How long will this state of things last?" the majority asked me, when they detected by my accent that I was no Siberian; and they shook their heads disapprovingly on hearing that I was unable to answer them.

Though we met few travellers all the time, the high road was by no means empty. We overtook or met endless caravans of sledges heavily loaded with goods. Horse after horse trudged along, the feet of one stepping on the tracks made by the one before it. Many were without drivers, each horse following the leader, who, by instinct, got out of the way of any approaching conveyances that did not give room. These caravans followed each other in an uninterrupted procession, and the tinkling of their bells was

the only sound in the still air. It is in this way that salt and incalculable quantities of salt fish, caught yearly at the mouth of the Obi, were taken down to Tyumen, thence to be sent by rail up and down the Trans-Siberian line. The fish, I was told, come up the river in such quantities during the season that the fishermen can never obtain enough receptacles in which to salt them. Thousands of fish, it was said, had generally to be left rotting in the sun.

Though I was to have a surfeit of snow before I left Siberia, I was entranced by the picture of those clear moonlight nights. The white plain glittered as if covered with diamonds, and in the deep shadows of the trees the blue and violet tones melted harmoniously into one another, making a perfect symphony of colour. I had never seen moonlight of such strength and radiance as in Siberia. This may be due to the transparency of the air, which is marvellously pure, as no microbes or germs of any kind can resist the cold blasts that come down from the North Pole without anything to arrest them on the way. Nor have I ever seen anywhere such beautiful sunsets. The whole sky was lit up by a scarlet and yellow glow as if a huge bonfire were burning near the horizon. In Tobolsk there were frequent displays of the Aurora Borealis, but I had not the luck to see one during this journey. I was so anxious to travel as fast as possible that we only stopped every three or four hours at the post relays to change the horses. This took about half an hour, during which we had just time to stretch our cramped limbs and enjoy the hot tea which was provided immediately on our arrival.

The post stations were usually one of the *isbas* (cottages) in a village, and the peasants in charge were most friendly and hospitable, not having as yet been affected by the hostility against the *bourgeois* which had become prevalent in the towns.

At one place, where the samovar was slow in appearing, I produced my thermos bottle. This nearly caused trouble. I had not realised it might seem very uncanny to the superstitious mind that had never heard of the invention. When I opened the bottle, which she had seen me take out of the sledge, and poured out steaming tea, my hostess threw up her hands and crossed herself vehemently. "This is sorcery!" she exclaimed. "They are witches! They do not even speak as we do!" This, of course, applied to Miss Mather, and my maid whose Russian was bad. (She was a Lett.) The woman seemed to think that we should bring misfortune into her house, and wanted to send for the priest! With the greatest difficulty I pacified her and demonstrated the workings of the bottle. My soldier escort proved useful in this emergency. As men of the world, who had seen me use the thermos before, they loftily explained to the civilians, of whom they were always slightly contemptuous as a species, that it was a German invention and a very clever one. Was it not known that the Germans were so clever that they had even invented monkeys? This was accepted as axiomatic and finished the discussion! I prudently refrained, however, from using the thermos after this! The people's justice—lynching—had come into use since the revolution, and I preferred not to tempt Fate!

We covered only about seventy miles on the first day of our journey, as the roads were appalling. We were told that we were lucky to travel by sledge, for in the summer the ruts are indescribable, and the usual conveyance then is a kind of basket on four wheels. Our drivers decided that it was necessary to make a halt of a few hours at night and to sleep at one of the stations, making an early start on the next day. Unfortunately the *isba* in which we were to rest was the smallest of those we had come across. In the

room allotted to us, the owner, his wife, and all his children were already established for the night on the broad flat platform of the stove. When the light was brought in several little tousled heads, several pairs of bright gleaming eyes were raised from the mountain of red pillows and patchwork quilts which formed this family bed. The host amiably invited us to share it with his wife and five children, "as it was warmer there," suggesting that he should himself go and join the drivers in the next room. We were not tempted by his hospitable offer, but preferred to spread our coats on the ground, using our haybags as pillows, and resting on them in our clothes. Our hosts told us not to mind them and were really most considerate. Still, it came somewhat as a surprise when I woke up at night to feel something about my head, and to see my host bending over me. "Sorry I woke you," he said. "I happened to tread on your hair" (I had taken it down) "in stepping over you when I went to look after the horses."

On the second day of our journey we crossed the Tobol river again and again, as it winds from right to left in nearly parallel lines in its northward course. Each time the horses rushed down and up the steep banks at the top of their speed. Our charioteers were changed at every station, and we were driven once for several hours by a bold maiden of some sixteen summers, who had kept up the family trade while the men were at the war. She drove her horses even more recklessly than our usual drivers, and her shrieks were simply blood-curdling.

We now passed darker and gloomier forests in which, we were told, the Tobolese used often to go bear-hunting. Indeed only the day before a beautiful bear had been seen by some travellers. That was not our luck, happily; but as it got dark I saw from the shelter of our *vozok* some small specks, like glow-worms, under the trees. Miss Mather suggested that

these might be wolves' eyes, especially as our horses pricked up their ears and pressed close together. I scoffed, considering that wolf days belonged to Russia's ancient history; but when I asked the driver he startled us by saying that they were " wolfies," and " bold ones too," he added. He seemingly felt quite friendly towards them, but we did not! This, joined to the tales of highwaymen and the great fatigue we were beginning to feel, would have made us ready to sleep at the station we reached at midnight, had not the people there struck us as having something unpleasant in their faces. We both had the same impression, though the owners were eager for us to remain, showing us a room actually prepared for travellers. Miss Mather asked me in Russian, our hosts being present, if I had not noticed the great likeness they bore to our Italian acquaintances the Fra Diavoloffs. I heartily agreed, and the people, pleased at their resemblance to unknown gentlefolk, were much surprised and aggrieved at our decision to depart! This proved a wise act on our part, for I heard later that this special post house was ill-famed, and even during our brief stay its expert owners managed to pilfer our belongings.

Three hours later we saw at last the lights of Tobolsk shining at a distance. It was like the sight of land to shipwrecked mariners. By this time we were completely worn out. Every bone in our bodies ached, and I was particularly sore, as I had had the unfortunate idea of sitting on my box instead of reclining gracefully on the haybags. I feared to trust my possessions to the soldiers' care, but though I had my property I had cause to remember my box for many days, as it rubbed through both my fur coats and left indelible marks on my person! We were taken to an hotel—a worse edition of the one at Tyumen; but nothing mattered to us. The only feeling we had was that we had reached our goal at last.

CHAPTER III

TOBOLSK IMPRESSIONS

WHEN I woke up, grey dawn was creeping in at the window. Glancing at my clock, I saw it was 9 A.M.; the nights are long in these Northern latitudes. By the time I was dressed, however, the sun was shining brightly, and indeed glorious sunshine was the one and only charm of Tobolsk in winter. Every day, during the few short hours it appeared, the sun was as powerful as in a Swiss mountain resort.

I did not dawdle over my toilet, as I was in a hurry to go and see the Commandant, Colonel Kobylinski, who was in charge of the Imperial Family. I asked my way from passers-by, and I soon reached the Colonel's house. He was greatly astonished at seeing me, for he had been awaiting a telegram announcing my arrival at Tyumen in order to send one of his men to meet me and act as an escort. He gave orders that I should be allowed to enter the Korniloff house in which the Household of the Emperor and Empress were living and into which no one could go without his permission, telling me that he would follow me in a few minutes.

The Korniloff house had belonged to a wealthy merchant and stood on the main street, the Tsarskaia (which had of course been renamed Liberty Street in 1917). Opposite to it I noticed a moderately sized white stone house to which my attention was drawn

on account of a high, evidently new, wooden paling that cut off part of the street running beside it. Sentries were posted all around this paling at a distance of some ten paces from each other, and a double post stood at the gates. When I glanced up at the windows I stopped short in surprise, for I saw looking out two youthful figures in pink and blue blouses that I knew well. They were the two Grand Duchesses Marie and Anastasia. When they saw me they began to gesticulate wildly. Then evidently they called the others, for in a moment all four Grand Duchesses were at the window waving their hands, while the youngest jumped up and down in her excitement. I waved my hand in return, pointing to the Korniloff house to indicate where I was going. At this moment the Commandant appeared and rapidly marched me in. The sentries on guard in front of both houses were getting uneasy at seeing signs exchanged between their prisoners and an unknown person, and were ready to arrest me.

I had to wait a few minutes in the hall for my luggage to come from the hotel, for the Commandant could not allow me to join my colleagues before one of his officers and the members of the soldiers' Soviet had personally ascertained that I had brought no papers of any kind for the prisoners. This of course I had not done, having given a promise to that effect, and knowing besides that I would be searched. This operation was a long and, for me at least, a tedious performance. Two soldiers, with bayonets fixed to their rifles, were posted at the foot of the stairs, to prevent my dashing up, I suppose, while the others under the supervision of the officer examined every single thing in my luggage. My dressing-case was turned inside out. My underclothing, my shoes, every item of my wardrobe were all separately examined. Every box and bottle was opened, every book shaken.

So thorough was the search that one man even thought it necessary to take a sip out of a bottle which very obviously contained some hair-wash, suspecting me of having infringed the prohibition laws. Prompted by Christian charity, I advised him not to touch it, assuring him that it was only quinine water that I used to make my hair grow better. He still insisted on sampling the stuff, with the result that he was nearly sick, spat violently, and swore that "these aristocrats' medicines were as nasty as themselves."

I heard the sequel to this the next morning. One of our doctors told me that my words of warning had evidently impressed themselves on the soldier's mind. He came to Dr. X, and a little sheepishly described some funny symptoms he had about the tongue. "You see," he said, "I happened to drink some specially efficacious hair-wash, and I think the hair must have started growing on my tongue. I have a kind of prickly feeling about it, and I should be much obliged if you could give me some medicine which would prevent the hair growing. It would be so extremely inconvenient if it should get longer." The doctor could not imagine how the man could have got such an idea into his head, but knowing that a long and involved tale would follow any questions on his part, prescribed some harmless stuff. His patient went off perfectly satisfied, and convinced that it was due to the medicine that the hair-wash never produced any bad results.

At last the search of my belongings was completed, the soldiers went away, and I was allowed to run up and join my friend and colleague, Countess Anastasie ("Nastinka") Hendrikoff, who, with both the Emperor's gentlemen, had been standing looking on from the landing above. The Emperor and Empress had been accompanied to Tobolsk by the Countess; the Empress's *lectrice*, Mademoiselle Schneider, a Baltic

Russian ; the Master of the Household, Prince V. A. Dolgoroukoff; General I. L. Tatistcheff; two doctors, and the Cesarevitch's tutors, Mr. Gibbes and Monsieur Gilliard. These all lived at the Korniloff house with the exception of Monsieur Gilliard, who was lodged with his pupil and they crossed the road to join the Imperial Family at meals. The ground floor of the Korniloff house was occupied by Dr. Botkine and his family and by the Kommissars. The rest of the party had the rooms on the first floor, but as the house had previously been used as law courts it had one immense room in the middle and only three small ones besides this. It was inadequate accommodation for the Household and servants, so the big hall had been divided into cubicles by wooden partitions, not reaching to the ceiling, which all opened into a corridor. One of these cubicles was allotted to me, and the Empress had had it made quite comfortable by sending over some of the furniture from her own bedroom, but I must say the absolute lack of privacy was sometimes embarrassing.

Of course my colleague and I chattered endlessly about everything that had occurred since we separated four months before. Nastinka's dark eyes glowed and her cheeks flushed when I gave her the latest news of Inotchka, her only sister, who was slowly dying of consumption in the Caucasus. The two sisters were all the world to each other, and it was from Inotchka's bedside that Nastinka had rushed back to Tsarskoe Selo on the news of the revolution to join the Empress in her danger. Now she seldom had news, and mine was the first detailed account of her sister that she had heard. Dolgoroukoff had a sick old mother at Petrograd. Poor Tatistcheff was the only one who had no near relations ; he had left an old mother of ninety in Russia, when he went with the Emperor to Siberia, and she had died a few

weeks before I started. They, in their turn, gave me all the details of the wearisome journey from Tsarskoe Selo to Tobolsk in August, explaining that the Emperor had not known till he was on board the train to what destination he was going. The journey which had caused so much apprehension had, however, been uneventful and not uncomfortable. The house assigned to the Imperial Family at Tobolsk had been used as barracks, and it was some time before it was fit to be lived in. The general impression I gathered was that the first few months at Tobolsk had been a rest after the atmosphere of heavy menace which had surrounded us all at Tsarskoe Selo. There was no turbulent soldiery whose presence was a daily threat (Tobolsk was not garrisoned). There were no factories, and political agitators had not reached that backwater. The soldiers who guarded the Emperor had been chosen from among the most disciplined element of the Tsarskoe Selo rifle battalions, and were at first not aggressive, and the population of the town was not hostile. The sympathetic demonstrations I had heard spoken of in Petrograd were legends, but when the Tobolese stopped before the Governor's house, where the Emperor lived, it was from a kind of friendly curiosity if not from actual sympathy. They were, needless to say, at once moved on by the sentry. The Imperial Family were led at first to expect that they would be given more freedom, and the Empress hoped that the young people at least would be allowed to go for walks, under an escort if necessary. It seemed such useless cruelty to shut up four young girls and a small boy, who were not themselves State prisoners—this distinction was several times emphasised under Kerensky's rule. But during all the long months at Tobolsk, from August to May, the Imperial Family were never allowed to take a single outside walk.

They had to tramp round and round the small enclosure within the deal palings that I had noticed on arrival. The space inside had been an unpaved street. It was dusty when it was dry, a quagmire in spring and autumn, and a deep snow plain in winter. Beyond this the house had no garden, unless a tiny cabbage patch could be called by that name. It was pitiful for the children. Even at Tsarskoe the poor little Cesarevitch, who never otherwise complained, had said to me wistfully: "Oh, if only *once* I could go out for ten minutes' walk, just beyond the gates."

Those closed gates! How we all loathed them! Only people who have been prisoners can understand what physical aversion a closed door may cause! A thing which otherwise one never notices, once it becomes a symbol of one's dependence, is so galling that it produces a feeling of acute irritation whenever one chances to glance at it.

Only on Sundays were the Imperial Family allowed to pass their gates, when, guarded by an armed detachment of soldiers, they were taken to church. No outsider was allowed to assist at that early service, and the crowd that assembled to see them pass was kept at a distance by the soldiers. The people looked on silently, but sometimes one could see an old peasant kneeling down in prayer, or some woman crossing herself. After January, at the soldiers' order, the walks to church were stopped, and a priest came to celebrate Mass in the house. The Household, who had, on the whole, to submit to the same rules as the Imperial Family, were allowed, as a concession, to take walks from time to time. At first they were authorised to go out alone, later they were accompanied by an armed soldier. These expeditions generally resulted in unpleasantness, for the soldiers considered the walks a waste of time for them and an attempt on our part

to evade the prison rules which they would have liked to enforce with full severity.

I waited impatiently during the whole of that first day for the Commandant to come and take me to the Empress, as he had promised to do in the course of the afternoon. Unfortunately, he was not the sole master. He shared his powers with the civilian Kommissar, Pankratoff, who pandered to the soldiers in order to gain their support. Pankratoff was a former political exile, a theoretic Socialist, and, though he was not unkind, he feared to make any concessions on his own responsibility. Pankratoff insisted that I should not be allowed to join the Imperial Family till the matter had been discussed by the soldiers' Soviet. He was afraid of offending them, and of exciting them to " excesses."

" Excesses ! " I learnt to abominate that word, which was for ever in his mouth ! Everything, to hear him, would produce excesses. Finally, a couple of months later, he precipitately fled from Tobolsk, fearing, as he said, excesses against himself.

His unfortunate suggestion started endless discussions. *All* the soldiers' Soviets, as well as the town Soviet, had to say their word. Days passed, and no decision was reached. Sometimes a day was fixed. I waited for hours with my hat on my head, and then the Commandant would come in and say that our meeting was again put off. It was to be a continual disappointment. I really believe that there was ground for the Empress's suspicion that some of the soldiers who were particularly hostile to her, and who saw that she greatly longed to see me, found pleasure in devising a means to vex her by refusing. She wrote to me daily, clinging to the slight hope that as a Christmas treat I should be allowed to go to her. A trifling incident that occurred on that day dispelled all hopes, for one of the soldiers mistook Countess

Hendrikoff for me, and insisted on asserting that I had secretly disobeyed orders and had been to see the prisoners. There was no likeness whatever between us, but Countess Hendrikoff happened to have changed her usual coat for one that was rather like mine. There was no disproving the matter, as our word was never believed, and after this it only remained for me to wait patiently till the men should see fit to waive their objections.

For the sake of the children and servants, the Imperial Family had the Christmas tree that had always been a feature of their Christmas celebrations at home. A tree was, of course, an easy matter to get in this land of forests, and it was adorned by the children with all the humble things that Tobolsk could produce. The Empress and her daughters had spent weeks in working small trifles for everyone, using the material they could get on the spot and the silks they had brought with them. They were all expert needlewomen and managed to make the prettiest things out of the coarse, hand-woven, country linen, on which they drew their own designs.

I was not permitted to go to church on Christmas Day, and spent lonely hours by myself, for even Miss Mather was never allowed to visit us. She now had lodgings in the town, and it was characteristic of the Empress that she did not forget my old friend at Christmas, but included her in the number of those to whom she sent personal greeting. She sent her a little picture of holly and mistletoe that she had painted, with a charming note, in which she called herself a "countrywoman's daughter" and included her Christmas wishes. To me the Empress sent a tiny Christmas tree and some table-cloths and pillows embroidered by herself and her daughters, to which the Emperor added a little vase with his cipher on it, which he happened to have. On Christmas morning we heard

waits singing in the hall. Siberia kept scrupulously to the old customs which had begun to disappear in Russia. Troops of children went about in the streets headed by one of the church singers, carrying a large lantern shaped like a star fixed on a long pole. They sang quaint old chants, "glorifying the Lord Jesus," to old-time tunes. From house to house they went, and it appeared that their great desire was to sing before the Cesarevitch, but this was not allowed.

In a letter I had from the Empress on New Year's Eve (old style) she spoke of her joy at still being in Russia and all together. During these long months of unceasing humiliation and hardships her wonderful courage never wavered. Her great faith had given her that serenity of spirit which made her the rock on which all her family leaned, and which was the admiration of all those who approached her. Neither she nor the Emperor ever complained. They bore everything with the most wonderful dignity and calm. My colleagues told me how acutely the Emperor was suffering. He realised the chaotic conditions into which the country was gradually drifting ; the war was not won, and he felt that the sacrifice of his abdication had been in vain. The culminating blow to both the Emperor and Empress was the news of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. They were heart and soul with the Allies, and this was perhaps the event that grieved them most.

The long winter days wore on in endless monotony. They passed most easily for the young people, who had their usual daily routine of lessons. The Emperor and Empress had to create hourly occupations for themselves, in order to kill their thoughts. Prince Dolgoroukoff had been the Emperor's playfellow in his childhood, and his company and that of General Tatistcheff as well as that of the two tutors was a great resource. All these were

intellectual men of wide interests, and all could talk on general subjects outside Russia and its politics. Tatistcheff had been a military attaché for many years, and both the tutors were exceptionally good conversationalists. Reading was of course the chief solace for everyone, and when the books brought from Tsarskoe had been read, the local lending library was brought into requisition. This was by no means well stocked, and the books, from their appearance and often from their contents, might have belonged to the earliest settlers, but still they were better than nothing.

The house in which the Emperor lived was fairly large and not too uncomfortable, but was bitterly cold. The temperature outside was only a few degrees warmer than in the Polar Circle, and was only made bearable by the absolute stillness of the air. The Imperial Family were allowed to keep their own servants and cooks, but had to be very economical, as the small supply of money they had brought with them was dwindling. The Bolshevik Government had given the order that they were to be put on soldiers' rations, so they paid for their own fare, which was of the plainest. When their clothes wore out they could not be replaced, as the shops gradually sold all their reserves and no new stocks came in. If sometimes new material appeared on the market it was at a fancy price. As the winter went on the difficulties daily increased. The worst feature was the absence of any reliable news from the world outside. At first the Emperor received a few copies of *The Times*, but later the soldiers got suspicious, and their Soviet decreed that the paper should be translated into Russian and submitted to their censorship daily before being given to the Emperor. *The Times!* Naturally, the Emperor never saw it again. Sometimes at the beginning one or other of the tutors would get a

foreign paper, but this did not last, nor did the Siberian papers reach us after January. These had not much news in them, but they were better than nothing, for when we had to fall back on the local paper we may be said to have been completely cut off from news. This was a parody of a newspaper printed on brown packing paper, and containing only a few telegrams, so much touched-up and distorted that even their sense was obscure, and only issued for the advertisements of sale and barter contained in it. Every month its only sheet dwindled, till, when it expired in the spring, it was about the size of a half-sheet of foolscap.

Though we got letters now and then, these had to be so carefully worded that they did not say much. All our correspondence, both the letters addressed to us and those we wrote, was censored officially by the Commandant and unofficially by the Soviet. Goodness knows how many letters never reached us. I had a proof of how carefully the soldiers read the missives addressed to us when a friend of mine sent some chocolate for the Cesarevitch accompanied by a letter to me. It appeared that a little later my friend got a postcard, seemingly in my writing, asking her to send some more chocolate and telling her to do so quickly, as we were shortly to be moved away from Tobolsk. We knew nothing of this at the time. The postcard was signed with the name by which my friends all call me, but there was just a slight difference in my handwriting, which the lady in question attributed to my writing less carefully than usual. She immediately bought the chocolate, which was a great luxury, and sent it. None of us ever got it, as we had never received the first parcel, but the soldiers probably enjoyed it.

As I was not allowed to visit the Empress, Her Majesty opened the window of her room at a fixed

hour daily and stood for a few minutes before it, wrapped in her coat. I did the same in the opposite house. Sometimes she would speak as if to someone in the room behind, and, the street being narrow, I heard the sound of her voice in the still air. Unfortunately, to my great disappointment, I was only able to catch a word here and there, and of course could not answer, as the sentries would have noticed this; but at least I saw her. The Empress had got woefully thin, her beautiful features were pinched, and her eyes had a strained look. She sent me a lock of her hair. I was shocked to see that it had turned quite grey. I saw the Emperor and his children daily from my window, which being on the first floor allowed me to overlook their whole little enclosure. They made paths and shovelled away the snow for exercise. The Emperor always stopped for a moment when he came out and glanced up to my window, slowly raising his hand to his cap. I could not make any recognition of his salute, for fear it should be thought a secret signal code, but he never failed in this gracious greeting.

During the whole of the first three weeks I spent at Tobolsk in the Korniloff house, only once did the soldiers condescend to depute one of themselves as the obligatory escort and take me for a walk. That day I went to the cathedral, which was high up on the hill. My guard proved to be a good-natured creature, who said he would walk two steps behind me, "for it would look better." We toiled up the steep hill, sliding and slipping on the ice. The soldier helped me in a most friendly manner: going up a few steps in front of me and steadying himself by his rifle, which he planted firmly in the ground, he lent a hand to pull me up. The cathedral was an uninteresting modern church, in which was the shrine of St. John, whose recent canonisation had given vent

to much religious squabbling. My escort behaved quite reverently and stood at the door while I went in. I returned quite pleased, but when in a few days I asked to go out again the men refused. "It was too cold, too slippery, and besides they had other plans for their afternoon." This was their usual answer, and for this reason my colleagues preferred to take their outings mostly within the enclosure of the Governor's house, and except on very rare occasions did not insist on availing themselves of the permission to go about the town which had been stipulated for on their arrival.

My presence in the house seemed to be a continual eyesore to the soldiers. We constantly heard the sound of loud discussions issuing from the guardroom, which was just under Countess Hendrikoff's room. One day, at the end of January, Pankratoff came up to tell me that the soldiers, finding it wearisome to take me for walks, which they would have to do, as I could not spend the whole winter within four walls, had decided that it would be better for me to move to lodgings in the town and come without an escort to spend the day at the Korniloff house. I protested, but Pankratoff urged me to submit, holding out the hope that the order might be revoked in time. I had to agree, and after all, I thought, it came nearly to the same thing, and I should have the advantage of joining Miss Mather and of spending my evenings with her. This I did, and continued living a semi-prisoner's life, seeing no one and going nowhere except to the Korniloff house, for our gentlemen advised me to avoid making any acquaintances in the town. They were sure that a sharp watch would be kept over me and every word of mine would be commented on, and that the smallest thing might prove the cause of much unnecessary unpleasantness.

CHAPTER IV

A WINTER IN CAPTIVITY

THE town of Tobolsk lies picturesquely spread, partly on the high banks of the Tobol, partly on the river's edge, just at the point where that river falls into the mighty Irtysh. At this very spot the Cossack conqueror of Siberia, Yermak, was drowned in the seventeenth century. He tried to swim the river during a raid against one of the nomad tribes, but sank, weighed down by his armour. Yermak's coat of mail is shown in the Tobolsk museum, while his banner is kept as a national relic in the Cossack cathedral at Omsk.

On closer inspection Tobolsk lacks the attraction it has at a distance. The houses are mostly of wood, with here and there a brick one which is either a Government office or belongs to a wealthy merchant. The churches are very fine, but their number is really disproportionate to the population, for there are twenty-seven large churches in Tobolsk and less than 30,000 inhabitants. The beauty of these churches lies chiefly in their interior architecture and ornamentation. Not even in larger and less distant towns can be seen such beautiful wood-carving and artistic antique plaster-work, quite untouched by restoration. Some of the ikons date much further back than the churches themselves, and were probably brought by the first settlers as their most precious belongings.

Some were very interesting. In the Church of the Assumption, for instance, I noticed a curious ikon of St. Irene, presented to the church by an eighteenth-century merchant in memory of his spouse. It was nearly life-size, and evidently was the effigy of the deceased lady, in full evening dress with panniers and powdered hair. Every detail of jewellery and dress, down to the red heels of her shoes, was minutely reproduced, and it needed the martyr's palm which the saint holds in her hand to convince the beholder that the presentment was not the portrait of an ordinary mortal, but that of a martyr—presumably in full dress!

The lower and upper towns are connected by a very steep road and by a high brick staircase, which was a monument to the work of Swedish prisoners of war in Peter the Great's time. It must have been truly hard labour to build it. These poor people left another memory of their stay, for it was they who executed Peter the Great's vast plan of deflecting the course of the Tobol in order to give space for projected warehouses at the foot of the hill. It was a gigantic work and must have been undertaken with the idea that Tobolsk would develop far more than it has done. Practically it has remained in exactly the same stage as it was at the time of the great Tsar's death. The aquatic origin of the lower town is apparent to this day, during every spring and autumn. The streets are all boarded over like a floor, as they used to be all over Russia in olden times. Often when the unwary pedestrian steps on one of these boards it rises under his feet as on a pivot, the rusty nails at one end having got loosened, and large puddles of black water are disclosed from which arise indescribable odours. All the springs, of course, still remain, and the cellars of the houses are flooded for parts of the year. No wonder that in the warm season the lower

town, where the Governor's house stood, was a hotbed of malaria.

There was little movement in the streets in winter. There were no cars, of course, and few people drove about in the bitter cold. One could see peasants doing their shopping, or people hurrying to their work, but no Tobolese ever went for a walk! Indeed the amount of clothing that had to be put on made walking a difficulty. Towards spring, when it got warmer, the rich merchants used to drive up and down the main street, displaying the most beautiful horses, and, during the carnival, innumerable sleighs, gaily decorated with ribbons and bells, could be seen dashing up and down with large parties of young people. It is the custom for the marriageable maidens of the town to drive about at this time decked out in their best, in order to be seen by eligible suitors.

A curious feature of Tobolsk was the daily market. This was held in the centre of the town. As soon as it got light the booths were opened in which the peasants who daily came up from the adjoining villages displayed their wares. Many who came only occasionally to town and had no booths of their own simply laid their goods on the frozen ground. In the market-place could be seen the motliest gathering of men and women imaginable. Here was a Tartar in a typical furred cap, expostulating with some old crone over the price of a smoked sterlet. Farther on a fisherman, well wrapped up in furs but wearing huge waders, examined some complicated Norwegian fishing-nets. Beside him could be noticed an Ostiak (a tribesman of Lapp origin) who had come to do his shopping in town. His face could scarcely be seen, for it was nearly covered by the fur hood of his curious coat, which was fashioned of different furs arranged in patterns outside, and lined with bearskin. This kind of coat was known locally as a "goose."

The Ostiak was buying something that looked like round white stones, but which was in reality frozen curds. Bread, butter, game, milk, everything indeed, was sold in the open air and was, of course, frozen, so that the milk was chopped with a hatchet and sold by the pound! The air was full of the sound of voices loudly haggling. The proximity of the East makes itself felt in this, and no transaction could be completed without the prices being loudly and lengthily discussed. The noisiest altercations took place before the booths where the villagers assembled to purchase ironmongers' goods, fishing-nets, coffins, and the huge wooden boxes, painted a bright green, in which feminine Siberia keeps its trousseau. Next was the old clothes market, where every imaginable masculine and feminine garment was displayed: a general's full-dress uniform could be seen hanging beside a baby's frock. Owing to the lack of imported material the prices were enormous; but it was a boon to the people who were not millionaires, for all the things that could not be purchased in the shops could be bought second-hand in the market.

There were no secrets in Tobolsk, for there was neither paper nor string to wrap up the parcels. Everyone came back carrying his or her purchase. It was always known when Mr. X had mutton for dinner, as all the town could have seen his wife walking down the street with half a sheep under her arm, or when Mrs. Z bought new felt boots for her children, for she carried them slung on her shoulder. The richer inhabitants of Tobolsk are mostly merchants dealing in fish or fur, the majority self-made men who had originally been peasants from the surrounding districts. Many of these it appeared were quite uneducated, only just able to spell their names, but shrewd business men who had amassed huge fortunes.

I was astonished to hear how many millionaires

there were in Tobolsk. From the outward look of the town and from what could be seen of the life of the people this seemed quite unlikely. The rich fishermen, as they are still called, kept to peasants' dress and worked at their trade in summer by the side of their own workmen. Local society, of course, I did not meet. This consisted of the families of a few Government officials, and was always a shifting element, as everyone who came to Tobolsk tried to get a change of post as soon as possible. The nucleus of the intelligentsia consisted of a few Polish families that had been exiled to Tobolsk after the Polish rising of '64. There were also the descendants of the Dekabrists (as the heads of the Rising in 1825 were called) who had married in Tobolsk and whose families had never left it. These descendants of political exiles provided a contingent of doctors, as well as of teachers for the local high schools. The Tobolese youth graduated either at the University of Tomsk or at the Commercial School at Tyumen, as Tobolsk had nothing beyond the high school. Owing to this, all the more promising youthful element drifted away as soon as it could.

Navigation was open for only a little over three months in summer. September generally saw its close, and then came the interminable winter in which a horse sledge was the only means of reaching the nearest railway junction. No one who could help it remained in this place of stagnation, so old-fashioned that even in 1917 Gogol would have found in it many characters for his books. I heard from my landlady that there used to be a few concerts and theatricals in winter, but since the revolution all these gaieties had disappeared. There were only a couple of cinemas with worn-out films, which still, however, managed to entrance the Tobolese.

When I went about in the town I was surprised to see placards with orders of the Governor appointed

by Kerensky still posted up at the street corners. Banks were actually open and business was going on as usual, though the directors had glum faces, foreseeing the fast approaching time when they would have to suspend payment, as the supply of currency had ceased coming from Petrograd. This state of things lasted during the first months after my arrival at Tobolsk.

The house in which Miss Mather and I lived belonged to a well-to-do family, but like most of the Siberian homes it was singularly lacking in comfort. The well-scoured floors were shining and slippery from the amount of soap expended on them, but there were no carpets of any kind. The furniture was mahogany of a most mortifying hardness ; the muslin curtains were spotlessly white, but formed no protection from the blasts that came from the windows. Perhaps this was supposed to make up for the lack of ventilation in the room, for no Siberian window is made to open. Every house has double windows, but lacks the movable pane which is to be found in the windows of the Russian houses. The only air is admitted by a small round opening in the wall, about three inches wide, which is closed by a large wooden cork, going right through the wall, looking rather like a glorified champagne stopper. I must say that I was surprised to find, when this was opened in midwinter, what a large amount of cold air could come in through so small a hole ! On the other hand, the houses have a very large number of windows more suited to Italy than to the north. This can only be explained by the craving to let in as much light as possible in the daytime to make up for the long hours of darkness of the northern winter night. This longing for an illusion of living in sunnier climes must also be the reason for half of the best parlour always looking like a greenhouse, with rows of *Ficus elastica* stiffly ranged

against the walls and generally three or four canary cages swinging among them.

In this particular year the lack of labour had prevented the town being sufficiently provided with fuel for the winter, and most of the houses were icy. We had to do as our neighbours did and wear felt boots and coats in the rooms. Our hostess was the mother of a large family. Her days were well filled, for housekeeping is no joke in Siberia, where food plays a leading part in life. The good lady prepared gargantuan repasts every Sunday, when all the family assembled. There was fish in every form and of every size. I once saw an ungainly frozen sturgeon some six feet high propped in a corner against the door, waiting to be cooked and chopped up, as there was no table large enough to hold it. Caviare was served in such huge bowls that it was quite unappetising—there were seas of it; and as to pastries——! There were no bakers' shops in Tobolsk, so every housewife had to make her own bread, and endless were the varieties they produced. And the *pirogs* and the *pelmeni*! The *pelmeni* is a small flat cake, rather like a tiny boiled pudding, no larger than a half-crown, with chopped meat inside. When this national Siberian dish was on the menu all the good woman's friends were invited to the feast, while on the preceding day the whole household, including the maid and the small grandchild, had for hours rolled and pinched pastry and minced and pounded meat. Such mountains of *pelmeni* were prepared that they looked to me sufficient for a regiment, but the guests always seemed to be able to dispose of them! It is true that a *pelmeni* invitation means that you will get only that delicacy in all its forms—*pelmeni* floating in the soup, boiled *pelmeni*, and, lastly, the same, fried! Had I gone through such an ordeal I think I should never have wished to see them again.

As washing arrangements in private houses are mostly on the same lines as those at the hotel, the Russian steam bath plays a great part. Every house, even a peasant's cottage, has its own bath-house attached to it, as is customary in the villages in Russia. Among the merchants, whose bath-houses are very luxuriously fitted, an invitation to a friend for bath and tea was much appreciated. A party of brick-red ladies in elaborate nightcaps could be seen in many homes on Saturdays, the consecrated "bath day," sitting before a well-laden table. To judge by what we witnessed, it is incredible that such a vast number of samovars are needed to minister to the thirst which long washing operations in an almost suffocating temperature engender.

Both the Governor's house and the Korniloff house had the advantage of possessing bathrooms. I was the first to use the bathroom in the Korniloff house. None of my colleagues had had the courage to try it, for it had special heating arrangements and the soldiers had to be approached diplomatically if they were required to heat one stove more. The bath was a most wonderful arrangement in carved white marble, with ornate bronze taps—the former owners of the house having been extremely wealthy. Its geographical position was unique, for it was suspended nearly half-way up the wall and no steps led to it! To reach it I had a chair put on a table, and in this way I managed successfully to clamber in. One of the soldiers had graciously agreed to heat the bath for me, on condition that I should run it for him afterwards, as he wanted to try what this kind of bath was like. I did so, and in this way we bathed regularly in turns.

This man was rather a curious type. He was one of the most violent orators of the Soviet, an extremist, and a crank. He told me that he had a

respect for Woman in the abstract, "having a soft heart"! which, in parenthesis, did not prevent him from being absolutely ruthless towards his political opponents. As I belonged to the gentler sex, he talked lengthily to me while he heated the stove. I was interested by his conversation, for he had previously been a workman in a large china factory in Russia, and his account of the sweated system on which it was conducted was appalling, and I had the impression that it was a true picture. He, on his part, listened attentively, much interested, when I explained to him the Danish laws for the protection of workmen, and we finally came to discuss his matrimonial projects in a really friendly manner.

To return to my lodgings. Besides our hostess's family, a stout merchant woman, who hailed from Berezoff, a town in the extreme north, also had rooms in the house. Someone had told me before that the natives of the lands bordering on the Polar Circle were all pale, puny, and stunted in their growth. She was an evident and convincing contradiction to this report. The worthy soul was about six feet high, weighed probably about seventeen stone, and her round countenance showed a dangerous tendency to apoplexy when she returned from a party where she had enjoyed prolonged steaming and copious draughts of tea. Her usual dress was a trained black satin gown of antiquated shape, while a black handkerchief was tied peasant fashion over her head. At first I believed her to be a humble friend of my hostess. It was surprising to be told that she was an extremely wealthy fish exporter. This curious woman had a wonderful business head, and after her husband's death ran her own firm very successfully, unaided. She was almost illiterate, but had decided to give her only daughter the advantages she lacked, and had come to Tobolsk on that account. That young person was about

sixteen and was imbibing knowledge at the high school. She inherited none of her mother's shrewdness or good nature, and her only occupation during the day was looking out of the window while eating pounds of expensive sweets. In the evenings she went to the soldiers' dances, a proceeding on the girl's part which was vainly forbidden by her headmistress, but was a sign of the times, for all the girls of the town of every class flocked to these dances.

The Berezoff lady told me many interesting tales about the life and customs of the people in her part of the country. Many nomad tribes live near Berezoff, the Ostiaks being the most numerous. The whole upper course of the Irtysh and the Obi is a flat and bare snow plain, which suddenly comes to life in the course of three short summer months. The snow melts very rapidly, the rivers break up, and summer follows winter in the course of a week. Nothing can grow on these plains except stunted birches and fir trees, cranberries and cloudberries. The people live on fish and by fish, for it is the greatest produce of the country. As the nomads can live all the year on the result of their summer's fishing, they do not trouble their minds much about the soil, which the Ostiaks only cultivate in patches here and there. Wherever they happen to pitch their tents in spring they sow a little wheat and one or two vegetables that ripen quickly and do not need much care, and this suffices for their simple wants. The moment the snow falls they wander about from place to place on their sledges drawn by reindeer or dogs, the well-known Siberian *laikas*.

There are very few churches, and from time to time a priest is sent from Berezoff to go round the encampments in order to minister to the spiritual needs of the people. These priests witness curious scenes. The tribes travel hundreds of miles to attend a service.

They bring ancient babies to be baptised who have been born five or six years previously, but could not be brought before for some reason or other, and who generally protest vigorously at the immersion which the ritual of the Orthodox Church demands. The young folk come to get married, and rows of couples stand one behind the other during the one ceremony. The priest has to be very careful not to make a slip in reading out the names of the different parties from the pieces of paper on which they are noted. It was said sometimes that an agonised voice would be heard saying "*Not* Peter to Mary, but Peter to Katherine," or *vice versa*. They were not unnaturally terrified at the idea of being inadvertently married to the wrong person!

Some come to have their relations buried "by proxy." When an Ostiak dies he is generally buried by his people without any religious ceremony, but when a priest arrives in the neighbourhood the dead man's relatives take a few handfuls of earth from the grave, tie it up in a handkerchief and bring it to the priest. He holds a memorial service, during which all the little bundles are blessed. The Ostiaks take the earth back with them and sprinkle it over the mounds, and have the comfort of believing that their departed relative has received Christian burial at last.

The Church and everything connected with it has preserved many old-fashioned customs in Siberia. It is the land of *stranniki* (wandering prophets) and beggars! I used sometimes in Tobolsk to go to evening service in an old-world monastery, whose dilapidated walls showed that it was not one of the churches frequented by local fashion. This gave it a special charm to my mind. Rows of black-robed monks intoned the chants in the particularly low and sweet bass voices that are found among Russians. In the middle of the church stood the abbot-bishop,

in a long violet mantle, his face the ascetic countenance of a medieval Christ. The Middle Ages were also suggested by the beggars at the door. There were rows of them, some blind or paralysed, others displaying hideous sores or wounds. They sang the chants and dirges so beloved of the Tsars of olden days to quaint old tunes that I had never heard before, and when a few kopecks were given them they intoned prayers for the souls of all one's departed. They prayed for "The mother that bore you, the father that loved you." Every relation was mentioned with a different epithet, and the refrain was the anthem of the Burial Service: "And may they rest with the Lord and His Saints."

Some of the beggars were not quite *bona fide*. I often met one man who had lost his legs in some accident, dragging himself about the streets in a little trolly. He owned a good-sized house, where his family lived comfortably on his gains. Another beggar was a hale and hearty woman, who always started her appeal by saying that she was the mother of orphans and one herself, and had to go about naked and unshod. This description was not quite accurate, for even if she really was an orphan, she was a ripe one, being about fifty, and she always wore an excellent sheepskin coat and most elegant *red* felt boots, the envy of her neighbours. She had quite sufficient means, but considered begging an easy and simple way of increasing her income. The public allowed themselves to be imposed upon, partly from good nature and partly from a superstitious fear that a refusal might bring them ill luck.

Towards the end of February 1918 the Bolshevik regime was definitely introduced at Tobolsk. The heads of the Kerensky administration fled and Bolsheviks came from Tyumen to replace them. A Soviet combined the functions of all the Government

offices. The law courts were closed. A popular university for peasants took the place of the high schools which were abolished, only the primary schools being left. In the new university most of the old university's programme, as well as lectures on foreign languages, was to be expounded in the course of four months! It was a farce—only the ignorant could be deluded into thinking that people who could only read two-syllable words in their own language would be able to follow these lectures with any success, but the peasants and soldiers flocked to them. They believed what they were told about the value of education, and were unable to realise how utterly useless this superficial knowledge would be to them without the grounding of the intermediate stages. Poor souls, they all felt now that they were "University men."

CHAPTER V

THE SHADOW OF COMING EVENTS

DURING all this time Tatistcheff and Dolgoroukoff were sorely troubled about what was happening outside our little world of Tobolsk and about the prospects in the future.

To make up for the lack of news in the papers the most contradictory and alarming reports were circulated in the town, and reached the inhabitants of the Korniloff house through chance conversations overheard by the doctors or by us among the soldiers. An anti-Bolshevik rising in Eastern Siberia was rumoured, and the Amur Cossacks were said to have rebelled against the Soviets. Later the Czechs were reported to be giving trouble to the Soviets, even before they really formed an army against them. At the same time news began to come from Tyumen that some Bolshevik sailors had arrived with orders to requisition all the gold and silver still owned by the population and that people were being arrested in numbers.

One day in the middle of March I was asked by Tatistcheff to join him and Dolgoroukoff in the former's room, as they were anxious to talk over with me the various inferences they had drawn from the changing situation. It was the only room which had thick walls, and so the only one in which we could talk freely. The cubicles, one of which I still used when I came to the Korniloff house for the day, of

course offered no privacy. The bane of our lives was the feeling of being spied upon. There seemed always to be a soldier loafing about on some pretext or other, to see about the heating or to inquire if the Commandant were there. The charwomen, who had been supplied at the men's recommendation, were certainly all their agents.

Tatistcheff was tall and spare and eagle-nosed; his hair and beard were grey, and his kind blue eyes sparkled with humour, while his bearing always revealed the old cavalry officer. He wore the plain clothes that he had put on after the Emperor's abdication. Now he sat back in his chair, so much perturbed in mind that he had not even lit his customary cigarette. Dolgoroukoff was much younger-looking, fair, with an impassive face which hid great depth of feeling. He paced up and down the room while he discussed the future with his colleague. Dolgoroukoff still wore his khaki-coloured uniform, but it had no longer any signs denoting General's rank. Both the Emperor and Prince Dolgoroukoff always wore uniform, as they had no plain clothes with them in Siberia.

Tatistcheff was much concerned by all he had heard. "The soldiers are getting more and more out of hand," he said. "They were fairly reasonable when we came here. Now they are being replaced by new men sent from Tsarskoe. They are getting wilder every day. You can hear them from Nastinka's room shouting in their guardroom. Every day there is trouble—first the shoulder straps" (the soldiers compelled the officers to remove all their badges of rank), "then came the rows about churchgoing, then the unpleasantness about the walks, . . . small daily vexations, heralding greater trouble. They are in deadly fear of appearing too humane . . . for Moscow's taste.

"The worst of it is we are absolutely unable to do anything to get Their Majesties out of this awful situation. We can only be helped from outside. We dare not communicate with anyone for fear of plots being suspected and thus causing more harm.

"I can only hope that some loyal people in Petrograd may know the danger the Emperor is in and that some International Red Cross Society may take steps to rescue the family."

"Do you think the Emperor and Empress themselves realise their danger?" asked Dolgoroukoff. "They must realise it," said Tatistcheff. "But they do not allow themselves to dwell on it. Also they hear even fewer rumours than we do. But, after all, who knows what may happen? We really know nothing for certain, and the Bolshevik rule is milder in Tobolsk than it is anywhere else. We must just try to keep our mental balance. After all, the Governments of foreign countries cannot look on in silence."

I remember this conversation well. Unfortunately, all foreign Governments were then so much occupied with their own affairs that all of them lost the opportune moment when the more important ones could, each in turn, have saved the Emperor and his family.

For us to try to organise some plan of escape for them was clearly impossible. There were too many in the Imperial Family for them to go undetected together, and they would not have agreed to part and try to leave separately, which would have been their only chance. The climatic conditions of Tobolsk, the distance from any railway, the telegraph that could at once have warned the authorities hours ahead—all were against it. While navigation was open, perhaps some energetic men from outside could have made a successful attempt at a rescue. After October 1917, two months after the Imperial Family arrived at

Tobolsk, I believe, it was already too late. Only some powerful organisation with ample funds at its disposal could have done so, and this did not exist. The Emperor and Empress themselves thought that their wisest policy was to remain passive. They were averse from the idea of leaving Russia and believed that if circumstances became really menacing, their friends would find a means of helping them. They did not know how absolutely powerless all of these were!

The whole family stood the climate remarkably well, even the Empress, who was always delicate. They had their own doctors, and an oculist or dentist was only occasionally called in to attend to them. Before Christmas, their own dentist, Dr. Kostrisky, had voluntarily come from Russia at great risk to himself to treat them. After he left a local practitioner was called in to attend to the Emperor's teeth. This was a young Jewess, whom I came also to patronise. Mrs. X was proud of being, as she said, one of a family of eight "politicals." All of these had been in prison for the murder of Government officials and other acts of violence, as she boasted to me. She was conscientious, and did not vent her political enmity on the Emperor or any of us while we were her patients.

In her consulting-room it was easy to feel the spirit of the times. It was full of German prisoners of war, now free, and though there were few officers among them, I must say that they were the most polite of the mixed crowd, mostly soldiers, who were awaiting their turn. Funnily enough, the ultimate ambition of every man was to have all his teeth, sound and otherwise, picked out with gold! It looked "civilised and elegant"! In order to show the equality of mankind, the patients were not allowed to exhibit their mouths in private to Mrs. X. Two victims were attended to simultaneously, sitting side by side. When my turn

came I was often invited to lend a hand and hold a writhing man's head, while Mrs. X toiled away with gusto. When she had me safely in the chair, she enjoyed herself by spouting endless socialistic harangues at me—regular meeting stuff, with the result that sometimes she got so much excited that she stamped about, with forceps in one hand and cotton-wool in the other, denouncing *bourgeois* life! My answers were inaudible as my mouth was gagged with cotton-wool. I found in time that this woman had a softer, more feminine side. Considering that as I came from Petrograd I must know something of the fashion, she left me one day with my mouth well opened by a horrible metal arrangement, to exhibit an elaborate coat and skirt which a prisoner of war had made for her. "He was a cutter at one of the great Paris couturiers," she told me, "and I do wish you would look how the back fits, for you must be a judge of such things!" So when the gag was out I had to inspect and comment!!

On looking back I am grateful for her ministrations. She did her work well, though she *had* to use methylated spirit as a disinfectant, nothing more orthodox being available!

CHAPTER VI

THE LONG ARM OF MOSCOW

ONE day towards the middle of April Nastinka Hendrikoff told me on her return from lunch at the Governor's house that the Cesarevitch had fallen dangerously ill. He had burst a blood-vessel, which had brought on a sudden and violent attack of internal hæmorrhage. Later in the day I met the doctor coming up the stairs. He looked very gloomy and said that the boy was seriously ill. His kidneys were affected by the hæmorrhage, and in that God-forsaken town none of the remedies he needed could be got. "I fear he will not pull through," he said, shaking his head, his eyes full of anxiety. He had been the Cesarevitch's doctor for many years and, like us all, dearly loved the gifted and charming boy. The Cesarevitch was exceptionally attractive, warm-hearted and clever. To his parents he meant everything in the world. It was horrible to think of their feelings should he be taken from them. The Empress spent all her days and most of her nights in the sick-room. The fever rose high and nothing could alleviate the little patient's intolerable suffering. We all shared the poor mother's alternate fears and hopes. For nearly a fortnight the doctors had the gravest apprehensions.

All this time the situation in the town was daily growing worse. Bands of Bolshevik soldiery, both

from Ekaterinburg and Omsk, had arrived in close succession at the end of March. The rival bands vied with each other in conducting domiciliary visits. Rich citizens were arrested and imprisoned. A cordon of soldiery was drawn round Tobolsk in order to prevent anyone leaving or entering the town unnoticed. It was said that both the Ekaterinburg and the Omsk men had the ultimate object of getting the Imperial Family into their hands, but the guard, who drew special pay for this job, said they would murder all the prisoners themselves rather than give them up.

We were never able even to hint to our friends how desperate we thought the situation was growing. If we had been looked upon with suspicion before, everything we wrote now was supposed to mean something else that was never intended.

Now, too, Moscow remembered the prisoners at Tobolsk. A wire came from the Central Soviet ordering the arrest of the " citizens Tatistcheff, Dolgoroukoff, and Hendrikoff." (Up to now the myth of our being voluntary prisoners had been maintained.) Neither Mademoiselle Schneider's name nor mine was mentioned. Perhaps Countess Hendrikoff had been in some way confused with her dead father, who had been also at Court, for her name was turned into that of a man and the order for arrest was made to include her. This was never elucidated, but, luckily, instead of being taken to prison, all three and Mademoiselle Schneider were lodged in the house with the Imperial Family, on the plea that all were now also State prisoners. The house was overcrowded by this time, for there had not been a single spare room before. The newcomers had to be packed into very close quarters, the servants being moved to make room for them. The guard outside was doubled, and the servants were thoroughly searched whenever they went out or in. Great difficulties were made when the

kitchen supplies were delivered to the cook. A brief note in Russian, sent daily to the Commandant in an open envelope, was all the news I now received.

The climax came on April 22 with the arrival of a special emissary from the Moscow Soviet, a man called Yakovleff. He was accompanied by a squadron of horse and took up his quarters at the Korniloff house. Colonel Kobylinski was told by Yakovleff that both he and his men would now be replaced by the new arrivals. The envoy from Moscow called a meeting of the soldiers' Soviet, lauded the men sky-high for their services, and forestalled all objections they might have raised by promising them the payment in full of the money due to them, which owing to a lack of currency had been delayed for some time.

Yakovleff demanded to see the Emperor. He said nothing to anyone about his real mission, but from the papers he showed the Commandant he appeared to have been given the widest powers by Moscow. Seeing the Cesarevitch so ill seemed to disturb him, and he conferred with Moscow by telegraph after he had been at the Governor's house. After this he went again to the Emperor and told him during the interview that he had come to take him away. Yakovleff's original orders had been to remove the whole family from Tobolsk, but on account of the boy's state of health he was to take the Emperor alone. Where he was taking him, and why, was a mystery. The Emperor's first impulse was to refuse to leave. Yakovleff replied to this, that in such a case he would have to use force; so the Emperor had to submit to the Soviet's orders.

When the Empress heard the disastrous news she went through hours of acute self-torture, wavering between her desire to accompany her husband and her longing to remain with her boy who was still dangerously ill. He was the apple of her eye and she

never left him even in the slightest illness. This day was, I believe, the most agonising she ever went through, but finally she made up her mind to accompany the Emperor and leave her boy in her elder daughter's care.

Yakovleff gave orders for the preparations to be carried out as quietly as possible. Only hand luggage was to be taken on the journey, which he fixed for that very night. He hinted to the Commandant that the ultimate destination might possibly be Moscow, and the fear of a trial of the Emperor, like that of the ill-fated Louis XVI in the French Revolution, was in everyone's mind.

The Grand Duchess Marie, the third daughter and physically the strongest of the four, was deputed by the girls themselves to accompany their parents. Prince Dolgoroukoff, Dr. Botkine, a valet and a maid also went with them. Just before daybreak the travellers got into springless carts and were driven off at top speed in the direction of Tyumen. A mounted guard closed round them.

A couple of days later came the first notes from the Empress describing an awful journey. The thaw had set in and the roads were in a shocking state. The rivers, on which the ice was about to break up, had to be crossed on foot. Then after several days' silence the anxious children had a telegram from Ekaterinburg. It seemed that the whole party had been stopped there. The Imperial Family had been taken to a house which had been hastily converted into a prison, and were kept under the strictest arrest.

At least it was known where they were, but the Grand Duchesses could do nothing but wait patiently till the Cesarevitch recovered, for it had been settled that when it was possible to move him the rest of the party were to join the Emperor and Empress.

Just after Yakovleff's arrival the Tobolsk town

Soviet turned their attention to me. This took the form of a domiciliary visit, the first I had had since I went to my lodgings. At 3 A.M. I was awakened by a loud knocking. I jumped out of bed, and on opening the door was faced by a band of armed soldiers. I had read the placards posted up in the street, in which the population was warned always to ask to be shown the search warrants, as there were many Red guardsmen going about requisitioning things for their own use without the Soviet's sanction. I asked the man who seemed the leader if there were not some mistake, and if he really had an order to search my rooms. With an ironical grin he produced a document in which I read that a domiciliary visit was ordered to take place at the citizeness Buxhoeveden's rooms.

"Should anything suspicious be found, the aforesaid citizeness should be immediately arrested and taken to gaol under armed escort." This sounded hopeful. *Anything* might displease these men, and naturally I had many harmless possessions to which they might take a dislike. For instance, I had many photographs of the Imperial Family, and a photograph of even some distant relation of the Emperor's was always considered in itself a very counter-revolutionary symptom.

I ushered them into my bedroom, asking to be allowed to put on my dressing-gown as I had on my night-dress only. "None of that," they said, and ordered me to stand aside and hand my keys to them. Shivering, I sat down on a table in the centre of the room, and after a few minutes one of the men took pity on me and handed me my dressing-gown and slippers, after having shaken them about to assure himself that there was nothing hidden in them. They made me brush my hair for the same reason.

Here Miss Mather, in curling-papers and wrapped

in the inevitable tartan, appeared on the scene, but she was told to stand near the door and not to speak to me. The operations proceeded in dead silence. The men, who were Letts, worked very systematically, and, as was usual in those cases, opened every box and even little tubes of medicine, and looked through every paper I had. Now and again, when they read some of my letters, one or other would ask me a question, noting down my answer in his pocket-book. For two hours they worked, only whispering to each other from time to time. They were very thorough, investigating every nook and corner, looking into the stoves and ventilators, slipping their penknives between the boards, feeling every cushion and chair.

I had no political documents of any kind; still, knowing with what disfavour we were looked on, I felt none too hopeful of the results. However, even the photographs passed and my explanation was accepted, that as I had always lived with the Imperial Family it was natural that I should have their pictures. The time seemed endlessly long till the head man, after a brief consultation with his acolytes, turned to me and announced that as no compromising documents had been found by him I was free! They went, and the relief of their departure can be imagined, particularly as I discovered, on seeing them to the door, that not only was the corridor full of armed men, but that all exits were locked and the whole house surrounded by a guard.

After having discussed our visitors, Miss Mather and I thought some refreshment would be pleasant. Though it was only about 6 A.M., we decided to celebrate the occasion by drawing on our last reserves and brewing a cup of precious coffee that we had been carefully keeping for cases of illness. We sat down to partake of the festive beverage, which smelled perfectly delicious. Miss Mather had produced

some lumps of sugar and biscuits which she had secretly treasured, when suddenly we heard a most terrible knocking. We looked at each other—were our visitors back, and had they reconsidered their decision? I opened the door and in lurched another band of Red guardsmen. This lot were much more untidy than the first, and carried a large supply of all kinds of murderous weapons about their persons. "We have come to search the things of the celebrated Dunsiria," the leader said. At first I did not grasp his meaning, but then it flashed across my mind that this might have some connection with Miss Mather's Christian name. "Do you mean Miss Annie Dunsire Mather?" I said. "She is here, but she is a British subject and is under the protection of her Embassy." "Embassy or no Embassy," he answered with an oath, "we want her. She corresponds with capitalists in England."

Miss Mather had never corresponded with anyone except with her old sister in Aberdeen, to whom, poor lady, that epithet could in no way be applied. Her letters by themselves were extremely short, but, solicitous of Miss Mather's spiritual welfare, she often enclosed long pages, carefully copied by hand by an old friend from a book of sermons that had always seemed to me of a most depressing persuasion. Though these officials had no written warrant whatever, Miss Mather broke into the conversation, saying that as she had nothing to hide they might as well assure themselves of the truth of her words and examine her belongings. This some of the men proceeded to do, while the others sat down, drank all our precious coffee and ate everything we had on the table in the course of a few minutes!

The party were probably as zealous as the first lot, but laboured under the difficulty of being all illiterate. Of course they did not understand a single word of

English. They remedied this by ordering me to translate out of the first "seditious foreign book" they hit upon. This happened to be the Book of Common Prayer, and I gave with great gusto the translation of the Baptism of Infants, at which page they had opened it. They said they were satisfied. The chief aim of their visit seemed to be to discover hidden firearms. After having looked through everything one of the men, holding a pistol in most uncomfortable proximity to my head, asked me to disclose our "secret store of machine-guns"! My astonishment at the question evidently corroborated my words when I swore that we did not possess any of these articles and that neither of us could even handle a revolver! After a thorough search nothing reprehensible was found, but before departing one of the men went up close to Miss Mather and stared hard at her. He remarked that he had heard of "Great Britishers" but had never seen a specimen.

"I hope you like it," said Miss Mather.

"Too old a bird," he ungallantly responded, "and the colour is not what I supposed it to be." Only later, pondering over his remark, I realised that Great Britain had suggested India to his mind, and that a Britisher was supposed to be dusky! This idea was a counterpart of the assumption of the Aberdonian butcher who, on hearing that Miss Mather had been in Russia, inquired of her if the people in those parts were not black.

This search party insisted on taking Miss Mather's passport to the local Soviet, and as there was no British consul nearer than the one at Ekaterinburg there was no authority to which she could apply to intercede for her. This brought me into touch with Yakovleff, whose full powers raised him above the Soviet, and to him I appealed. It also gave me the welcome opportunity of asking the one undisputed

authority for permission, at last, to join the Empress. I obtained an audience with great difficulty, his assistants wanting to turn me away, but I managed to beard the great man himself on the stairs of the Korniloff house, and was lucky enough to obtain a hearing. Yakovleff was a middle-sized, dark, clean-shaven man, wearing the ordinary dress of a blue-jacket, but both his manner and speech showed him to be of higher rank. It was said that he had been a political exile abroad in pre-revolutionary days. His manner was curt and decided. He told me to follow him to his room, formerly Countess Hendrikoff's. I discovered that it had acquired a Spartan bareness. There remained only a bed, two chairs, and a table on which lay a huge map of the Government of Tobolsk, on which I noted several lines drawn in red pencil. I never thought, at the moment, that these indicated the routes by which he was to take the Emperor away. I explained Miss Mather's difficulties, and he promised to give the order to have her documents returned (which was done immediately). He questioned me closely as to the why and wherefore of my arrival at Tobolsk, and I succeeded in proving to him that I had no political aims whatever, and that it would be much simpler and easier for those in charge to have me under the same roof as the others. He listened attentively, and after a few moments of silence abruptly said that he saw no reason why I should not join them, and told me that on the next morning I might come with my luggage.

Unfortunately, on that very night Yakovleff took the Emperor and Empress away! I never saw them again; but he kept his word, and had given orders that I should accompany their children when they left in their turn.

The three weeks between the parents' and children's departure inaugurated a real prison regime for

the young people. The soldiers of the guard, who had replaced the Rifles, looked upon their prisoners with the greatest distrust. The new Commandant, a former stoker, Khokhriakoff by name, was controlled by his assistant Rodionoff, who daily introduced new rules and made himself particularly odious. The Grand Duchesses were closely watched: they had to submit to a daily roll-call; they were ordered to leave their bedroom doors wide open at night; every one of their requests was refused.

I realised how severe their guard had become when, on the Emperor's birthday, I passed their house on returning from church. I did this on all family anniversaries, to wave them a greeting from the street, and they were always at the window waiting for me. This time I saw no one anywhere and was beginning to fear that the Grand Duchesses also had been taken unexpectedly away, when, suddenly, at the last window I saw three heads showing over the window-sill. They nodded hastily and disappeared from view. The poor girls had been forbidden by Rodionoff to be seen at the windows. Not wishing to disappoint me, they had knelt before the window for some time and when they had caught sight of me they had bobbed up for a moment, but had not dared to stand and show themselves for fear the sentry opposite should catch sight of them and report to his chiefs.

There could be no joking with these men. Just about that time a poor schoolboy had tried to climb the wooden paling to catch a glimpse of the Emperor's children. Of course he could not fail to be seen, was caught and put into prison, whence he was removed to Ekaterinburg, and, as I heard later, was shot.

In the town one arrest followed another. The population was terrorised, while many people were

greatly indignant at the rumours about the treatment accorded to the Emperor and Empress on their journey.

Soon the arrest of the Archbishop Hermogene roused the indignation of the whole town. This aged prelate was known for his independence of spirit. In the times of the Monarchy he had fallen into disfavour and been deprived of his see of Saratoff for openly criticising the authorities in his sermons. The Kerensky Government had appointed him to the see of Tobolsk shortly before the Emperor had been sent there. The archbishop had forgotten past rancours and had shown kindness to the Imperial Family, and, after their churchgoing was forbidden, he authorised them to have a private chapel put up in one of their rooms and sent a priest for the services, but had never seen them himself. The archbishop had had several misunderstandings with the Soviet people about church matters, on which he maintained *he* was the sole judge within the precincts of his bishopric. The ostensible cause of his arrest was a religious procession organised during Holy Week, in the course of which services of intercession for Russia in her troubles were held before all the churches in Tobolsk.

How well I remember that Palm Sunday! I stood at my window and watched the procession passing—processions were very infrequent, as the Bolsheviks did not allow them. It was a lovely sunny day, very warm for the season. Surrounded by clergy of every degree, the venerable old man in his glittering gold vestments stood, his snow-white locks covered with the jewelled archbishop's mitre and his beard blown about by the breeze. The jewels on the numerous ikons carried by the clergy sparkled in the sun. The sweet voices of the singers filled the air. When the *Te Deum* was finished the archbishop made the sign of the cross with the crucifix he carried

in his hand. I shall never forget his face, not beautiful in feature, but full of human kindness. He seemed to catch the eye of every separate member of his flock when he gave them his blessing. The procession moved on. Not a single Bolshevik took part in it, but at some of the street corners soldiers were posted.

No incident occurred till the clergy returned to the archbishop's palace. Then a band of soldiers came and arrested Archbishop Hermogene on the plea that he had held " a public meeting " without lawful authorisation. He was led away to the soldiers' barracks, still clad in his vestments. His arrest lasted only a couple of days, as all the clergy and the townspeople petitioned the Soviet on his behalf, and the merchants offered bail. His liberty, however, was to be of short duration. A few days later " the Commission for the fight against the Counter-Revolution " issued a second order for his arrest on the accusation of his being party to " a plot."

The utter want of foundation for this was proved by the results of the domiciliary visit that was made in his apartments. No compromising papers were found. Not only was the archbishop's palace gone over minutely by the search party, but also his private chapel was visited as well as the cathedral close by. The men behaved shockingly during this search. They walked about the church smoking, with their caps on their heads, replaced the tapers in the chandeliers before the ikons by cigarette stumps, and handled the altar and the Reserved Sacrament itself most irreverently. Their behaviour was so outrageous that the Soviet had to publish a kind of explanation in order to pacify the population. The archbishop was away at the time, but on hearing of the warrant against him he immediately came to give himself up, confident of being found innocent of the charges raised against him.

On that very same night he was taken to Ekaterinburg under a strong escort. Without any reverence for his age and office the Bolsheviks shaved off his beard and cut his long hair [1] and obliged him to don plain clothes in order to prevent his being recognised during the journey. He was treated with the utmost harshness, and at Ekaterinburg he was put into gaol and was daily made to dig trenches with other political prisoners. Strangely enough one of these was Prince Lvoff, former head of the first Government after the overthrow of the Empire. The Tobolsk diocese sent a petition, covered with thousands of signatures, demanding their archbishop's release. The Revolutionary Tribunal could not find any plausible grounds for condemning him, and in the face of the indignation that the affair aroused the Soviet decided that it would be wiser to acquit him.

The archbishop was sent back to Tobolsk in charge of a detachment of sailors. On their way, between Tyumen and Tobolsk, the men heard of some reverses to their armies and they vented their rage on their hapless prisoner. They held a brief meeting and decided that he should die then and there as a reprisal for the death of their comrades. They bound the venerable prelate to the paddles of the boat, which still slowly revolved. He was not drowned immediately. The gruesome sight was too much for some of the men and they tied a weight to the mangled body, and only then the waters of the Tobol closed over the old archbishop and ended his sufferings.

After Tyumen was taken by the Czechs the body was recovered and Archbishop Hermogene's remains were carried to Tobolsk. The thousands of people who flocked to attend the funeral showed how deep was the impression made by this wanton murder.

[1] Long hair and beard are obligatory among the Orthodox clergy in Russia.

CHAPTER VII

JOURNEY TO EKATERINBURG

THE Kommissar Rodionoff was chafing at the Cesarevitch's slow recovery, which prevented the Imperial children's removal from Tobolsk. The little boy was sitting up for an hour in his chair for the first time, his temperature having been normal only for two days, when the Kommissar came in unexpectedly and announced that as the Cesarevitch was well again he would give orders for the immediate departure of the party for Ekaterinburg. It was with difficulty that the doctor managed to make him postpone the journey for a couple of days, pointing out that the lad was not fit to travel after a month's severe illness. The Kommissar grumblingly agreed, and the journey was fixed for May 20, 1918.

The party consisted of the Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, and Anastasia, the Cesarevitch, General Tatistcheff, Countess Hendrikoff, Mademoiselle Schneider, and myself, as well as the tutors, Dr. Derevenko, the Grand Duchesses' former nursery governess, Mademoiselle A. A. Tegleva, and some servants. I persuaded Miss Mather to remain at Tobolsk and dismissed my maid, who returned to her parents. The young people and I had a joyful meeting after those long months of separation. I was horrified to see how ill the Cesarevitch still looked. He was terribly thin and could not walk, as his knee had got quite stiff

from lying with it bent for so long. He was very pale and his large dark eyes seemed still larger in the small narrow face. Olga Nicolaevna had also greatly changed. The suspense and anxiety of her parents' absence, and the responsibility she bore when left as head of the house with her sick brother to look after, had changed the lovely, bright girl of twenty-two into a faded and sad middle-aged woman. She was the only one of the young girls who acutely realised the danger that their parents were in. Letters from the Empress came seldom, though she wrote daily to her children. (She numbered her letters and they saw that many never reached them.)

The Grand Duchesses wore simple travelling dresses and all three had bobbed hair. They had had it cut after their sharp attack of measles during the revolutionary days of 1917, and had kept it so, as it was more convenient in the circumstances.

We started on our journey with the utmost foreboding. We were all shipped on the *Rouss*, the boat on which the Imperial Family had come to Tobolsk. Rodionoff had sentinels posted everywhere, even at the doors of the lavatories, and ordered all of us ladies to leave our cabin doors open all night. No one undressed. The little Cesarevitch was locked into the cabin he occupied with his sailor attendant Nagorny, for fear, I suppose, that he should "swim away." A sharp watch was kept over us all, and we were told to speak Russian only and this very distinctly, in order that the men detailed to be our personal guards should understand what we said. The rest of the soldiery did not come near us and spent the day on their part of the deck, singing and playing the accordion. Some had fine voices, and it carried us back to happier days and the concerts for wounded soldiers in the hospitals, when they sang the "Volga Boatmen's Song" and "Stenka Rasin."

By order of Rodionoff everything that was in the Governor's and Korniloff's houses, whether belonging to the Imperial Family or not, was put on board the ship. Rows of the most garish bedroom crockery stood on deck, coming from no one knew where. Olga Nicolaevna was in despair when she saw the archbishop's carriage and horse, which he had lent to take the Cesarevitch to the boat, also being taken on board. "But he will need it. It is not ours, please tell them," she said. I assured her that my protestations would not help. We were prisoners and had to be passive. A lot of firing was going on, the soldiers shooting at harmless wild duck and anything else they fancied with their machine-guns.

After a long day and night on the boat we arrived at Tyumen, where, after lengthy discussions between our Kommissar and the local authorities, who wanted to arrest us in their turn, we embarked in the train that was to take us farther. We were marched over the landing-stage, each one of us accompanied by two soldiers. The Cesarevitch was carried, as he could not walk.

The train that was waiting was indescribably dirty. A combined second- and third-class carriage was assigned to the children and the Household, while the tutors and the servants were all bundled into an equally dirty cattle-truck which had been fitted out with deal benches but was officially called a fourth-class carriage. Again we have the same picture, sentries at every door, watching our every movement and following us at every step. At least we thought this could not last long, for the distance from Tyumen to Ekaterinburg was only 420 miles. Providentially the Empress's page, a man named Wolkoff, who acted as butler, had taken some cold meat and a large bottle of milk from Tobolsk, for the authorities had not provided us with food or drink. There were neither

plates nor forks, so General Tatistcheff's penknife was used to cut up the meat and bread, which we made into sandwiches, and, luckily, we had some goblets in our dressing-cases.

Tatistcheff foretold that the treatment meted out to us on this journey boded no good for the regime we should find in force at Ekaterinburg. He greatly feared that we of the Household would be parted from the Imperial Family. Nastinka Hendrikoff said openly to me that she had a premonition that all our days were numbered. She, personally, had gone through much sorrow that year. She was passionately devoted to the Empress, and the long months of captivity had tried her to the utmost and had developed intensely the religious side of her nature. Indeed she now lived an entirely spiritual life, and had so fixed her thoughts on approaching death that it had no terror for her. She was very pretty and looked younger than her twenty-eight years, but she welcomed the thought of death, so weary had she become of life and so much detached from earthly interests. I felt her drifting away to higher planes.

I fully shared my companion's apprehensions as to the future, and it was not easy to start cheerful topics so as to hide our secret thoughts from the young girls.

The Grand Duchesses were very quiet and never complained of anything. They felt that my advent had brought them again into touch with the outside world, and laboured under the delusion that it heralded further small concessions. The Cesarevitch lay all day, while we tried to amuse him as best we could. The poor little man longed for Monsieur Gilliard's company. He knew so well how to entertain him and make him forget how ill and weak he still felt. No entreaties, however, would persuade Rodionoff to allow either Monsieur Gilliard or Mr. Gibbes to join us in our carriage. Rodionoff seemed to enjoy

refusing and vexing those in his power, and his sneering remarks were harder to bear than direct insults. The other Kommissar, the stoker Khokhriakoff, though he was a very important person in the Ekaterinburg Soviet, played a secondary part here. He sometimes seemed even to pity the sick boy and tried to make his surroundings more comfortable while he was still at Tobolsk.

I saw how little ill-will the Emperor's daughters bore to their gaolers when Khokhriakoff hurt his foot in stepping off a ladder. Remembering the many wounded she had nursed during the war, Olga Nicolaevna was immediately full of solicitude and was anxious to look at his foot and bind it up. He was not a gaoler to her but a Russian sailor. The injury was nothing of importance and the man refused gruffly to have it seen to. I foresaw that he would never accept the aid of any of us, but Olga Nicolaevna was much distressed at not being able to help a human being in pain and worried over the " poor fellow " all the time.

The last bit of our journey seemed interminable. We began to ask ourselves if it were indeed to Ekaterinburg that we were being taken, and if there were not again some trickery, as had been the case with the Emperor and Empress. At last, shortly after midnight, the train stopped for a longer time than usual. In the darkness outside we heard voices, then we saw soldiers passing the windows, and some Kommissars entered our carriage. These were the Ekaterinburg authorities. They conferred with Rodionoff and Khokhriakoff, and we were finally told that we had arrived at the freight station of Ekaterinburg, but that on account of the lateness of the hour we could not leave the train till the morning. We all laid down, fully dressed, to rest before whatever the morrow might bring.

Early next day a Kommissar called Avdeeff appeared, to take away the Grand Duchesses and the Cesarevitch. Avdeeff, a workman from the Zlokazov works near Ekaterinburg, was the Kommissar who had charge of the Emperor and Empress. He was a coarse drunkard under whose rule his unfortunate victims suffered much. He ordered us all to leave our carriage. It was a grey, drizzly day. The station was surrounded by large forests, and beyond the open platforms we saw a line of one-horse cabs drawn up, beside which was a band of armed soldiers. Tatistcheff and I asked the Kommissars if the children were being taken to their parents. Rodionoff gave no answer, but Avdeeff said that this was so. The Grand Duchesses were told to leave the carriage first. The Cesarevitch followed, being again carried by Nagorny. Not one of us was allowed to assist them with their luggage. The young girls staggered under the load of their heavy bags, and when Nagorny wanted to help the Grand Duchess Tatiana, who held a dog under one arm and dragged a heavy black valise full of linen besides, he was rudely pushed away. Our turn had yet to come, and we stood helpless, watching the scene. The Imperial children were all put into the cabs—on the step of each stood two sentries with rifles—and they were driven away. . . .

Before they left we kissed each other good-bye, and we all had a dim feeling that this was a crucial moment. We had been marched away separately at every previous change from boat to train, but this seemed to be different. Tatiana Nicolaevna tried to take the matter lightly. "What is the use of all these leave-takings? We shall all rejoice in each other's company in half an hour's time!" But one of the sentries said ominously to me, "Better say 'Good-bye,' citizeness," and in his sinister face I read that this was a real parting.

Then came Tatistcheff's turn. He, too, took leave of us ladies, and in the lingering grip of his hand I felt he had the same feeling. After him Countess Hendrikoff and Mademoiselle Schneider were taken away. I was about to follow them, but the sentries barred the door with their rifles. Rodionoff came up and said that as there was no remaining conveyance I should have to wait. He locked the door of the carriage from outside, put the key in his pocket and, after assuring himself that the sentries were at their posts, went away. For several hours I waited in agonising suspense, for I was tortured with anxiety for my young princesses. We had not been told where they were being taken, and I trembled at the idea that they might perhaps not have been allowed to join their parents after all. I had little doubt that my companions would not be permitted to stay with the Imperial Family. We had heard at Tobolsk that Prince Dolgoroukoff had never been inside the Ipatieff house where the Emperor and Empress were confined, but had been taken straight to prison on his arrival at Ekaterinburg.

At last Rodionoff appeared. He announced to me that the local Soviet had examined my case and that I was free. "But where are the others?" I cried. "This," he said, grinning, "I will not tell you. If you know too much you will soon get old," quoting a Russian proverb. No persuasion would make him answer, so taking my bag I left the carriage, not knowing where I should wend my steps. Ekaterinburg was under martial law. I knew not a soul in the town and the passport I had was most incriminating, for it was still the same old diplomatic one.

I was at my wits' end when one of the sentries, now off duty, took pity on me and told me he would escort me to the main station, "where there was a carriage full of people of your kind." My guide was

as good as his word and led me to the so-called fourth-class carriage in which were Monsieur Gilliard, Mr. Gibbes, and the servants. There I spent the night. We all hoped that on the next day we should be joined by the rest of the Household, or should at least learn something about them.

Early on the morrow we saw from our carriage the unloading of the luggage that had come from Tobolsk, to the accompaniment of most unpleasant scenes. A few moments sufficed for a considerable crowd to collect around the van. I cannot describe the faces I saw; all the escaped gaol-birds and their womenfolk seemed to have forgathered. These were faces that bore the imprint of every vice written in large letters on them: fat faces, lean faces, but all with deadly, intense hatred stamped on them. They mocked and jeered as the luggage was taken out. There were many boxes, for not only were the Imperial Family's belongings in the van, but also those of the people who came with them, and the things that Rodionoff had seen fit to take away from Tobolsk.

A box was opened for some reason or other, and some pairs of old boots belonging to the Emperor came to view. "He has six pairs, and I have none!" shouted a man, pointing to his bare feet. At this one of the crowd cried "Death to the tyrant! Death to the *bourgoui*!" "All these boxes contain the gold dresses of these wanton women!" another cried, pointing to us. "Off with their heads!" A huge man with a red face, wild hair and beard, and dressed only in a torn shirt and trousers, got on a box and began a speech: "Tovaristchy!" (Comrades). "While these blood-suckers were gloating over their ill-gotten gains, we were sweating the sap of our lives in working for them. Now it is their turn; down with them; hang them; drown them in the lake," etc., etc.

The soldiers who were looking on laughed; some applauded.

Rodionoff and Khokhriakoff came at this juncture, and, seeing that the crowd was likely to prevent the unloading of the vans, had the platform cleared by the soldiers. The Kommissars began sorting the luggage, giving their orders: "This and that goes to the Ipatieff house,[1] these other things to the Soviet." Most of Their Majesties' belongings went to the Soviet or to the lodgings of the Kommissars themselves, and were never seen again by their lawful owners!

I managed to induce Rodionoff to tell me definitely where the Grand Duchesses were. After some sparring he finally said that they had really been taken to their parents and that the whole family was together. We rejoiced greatly at this, for we knew what separation would have meant to them all. About the fate of the others he would give us no information. The servants, prowling about the town, learned afterwards that both Tatistcheff and the ladies had been taken straight to different prisons. I could never manage to get into touch with any of them. I asked Rodionoff to give a parcel of underclothing and a few lines to Nastinka Hendrikoff, as I guessed that she would never see any of her luggage, but though he took the parcel he never delivered it.

Only two of the servants who had come with us were taken to the Ipatieff house. One was a footman named Troup, who was to replace the Emperor's valet who had been taken ill, while the other was the Cesarevitch's attendant, Nagorny.

When Mr. Gibbes and Monsieur Gilliard tried to insist on their privilege, as free men and foreigners, of being admitted into the Ipatieff house, they met with the same refusal that I had also got when I approached Rodionoff with a similar request on the

[1] The house in which the Emperor and Empress were imprisoned.

day before. Dr. Derevenko alone was living in the town. As a medical man he was on a different footing from the rest of the Household, and was allowed to attend the sick Cesarevitch, but was closely watched on the few occasions on which he was called to the Ipatieff house.

My companions and I, though we were officially free, were evidently carefully shadowed. Armed soldiers always prowled about the station and lounged near our car. There were so many of them that it was difficult to guess which was to be our special escort. Whenever we went to dine at the station restaurant soldiers sat on each side of us and listened attentively to every word we uttered. The streets were full of sailors and soldiers, and we generally had the uncomfortable sensation, when we walked abroad, of somebody slinking behind us. I had often had the same feeling at Tobolsk and had got into the way of stopping whenever I noticed this and pretending I was deeply engrossed by something I saw in the street till my "follower" had passed me, when I walked behind him in my turn. I had got so used to this manœuvre that I caught myself stopping short in the street when I heard steps behind me, for months after my return to Europe! Naturally in these conditions we went about as little as possible, but when we did go into the town we saw a good deal of movement in the streets. A great many cars rushed hither and thither, full of Kommissars. A German Red Cross mission had just arrived at Ekaterinburg in connection with the repatriation of the former prisoners of war, and the Bolsheviks were doing their best to be amiable to their guests, as the Germans played a great part after the Brest-Litovsk treaty. I saw German Generals and nurses being driven about the town, and their train, a beautiful one, was drawn up on the main line of the station, not far away from ours.

Did this delegation know of the danger to the Emperor and his family, or were they deluded into believing in the Bolsheviks' feelings of humanity? Certainly had they themselves offered to do anything for them the Emperor and Empress would not have accepted their help, but I always wondered how it was that through this Red Cross delegation the news of the desperate plight of the Russian Sovereigns did not filter through abroad. I personally could not approach the Germans, for I considered that we were still at war with them, the Emperor never having recognised the peace treaty concluded with them by the Bolsheviks.

Even the civil population of Ekaterinburg that we met in the streets seemed all akin to the ruffians that we had seen at the station when the luggage was being dealt with. Ekaterinburg was a large mining centre, and it had become one of the chief strongholds of the Bolsheviks after the revolution. Most of the criminal element from the whole of Siberia had assembled there, which explained the types we saw. I was also struck by the evidences of class hatred that were shown in the casual conversations we overheard in shops and in the street. I suppose that all the more moderate elements in the population were too terrorised to show themselves.

These impressions formed by our surroundings added to the anxiety we felt for the Imperial Family. We could not communicate with them in any way, as we had seen from the want of success that followed my attempt to write to my colleague that letters were evidently not forwarded. We discussed among ourselves what steps we could take to help the Imperial prisoners, but could think of nothing we could do that might not make matters still worse for them. We knew from bitter experience, both at Tsarskoe Selo and at Tobolsk, that if we irritated the Kommissars

by requests of any kind they would vent their displeasure on the prisoners. We were assured by some neutral foreigners whom I happened to meet, and who were in a position to have a better grasp of the situation than we had, that the Imperial Family were in no immediate danger.

The presence of a consular body at Ekaterinburg also seemed to us to denote a certain guarantee that measures for the maintenance of order would be taken by the authorities, and at the same time we hoped that through these consuls some news of the Emperor's presence in the town might reach authorities abroad and might lead to orders for some relaxation in the severity of the treatment meted out to the prisoners. Both the tutors and I were tied hand and foot, for none of us had valid documents and very little money. We could only stay where we were and await events. We did not again see the Kommissars who had brought us from Tobolsk, for their mission was now ended.

Everything connected with the State prisoners was so much shrouded in mystery by the Bolsheviks that many of the townspeople did not even know of the Emperor's presence at Ekaterinburg! All questions concerning them were regarded with such suspicion that it took us a couple of days even to locate the Ipatieff house. This was situated in the centre of the town and was entirely surrounded by a high new wooden paling, which completely shut it off from the street. This paling was much higher even than the one round the yard at Tobolsk, and the prisoners inside the house could not have seen anything out of their windows, the panes of which were also all whitewashed.

Once, standing on some steps at the door of a house close by, I saw a hand and a pink-sleeved arm opening the topmost pane. According to the blouse

the hand must have belonged either to the Grand Duchess Marie or Anastasia. They could not see me through their windows, and this was to be the last glimpse that I was to have of any of them!

After we had stayed for a week at Ekaterinburg we suddenly received a written order from the Soviet that we were all to leave the territory of the Government of Perm (in which Ekaterinburg lies) within twelve hours, and that we were to take up our abode in the town of Tobolsk. The order was peremptory; we could do nothing but obey. We hoped that perhaps the Tobolsk authorities might prove amenable and would give us permits to return later. Gilliard, Gibbes, and I clubbed together to pay for the fourth-class van in which we were to travel, for the servants had little money. If we hired the whole truck we would at least be together and would not have Bolshevik soldiery in our midst. With aching hearts we saw our carriage hooked on to an endlessly long refugee train, eastward bound. On June 3 we started back along the way we had come, still hoping that we might somehow ultimately manage to get into touch with the unfortunate family who were now completely isolated in the clutches of the Ural Soviet.

CHAPTER VIII

THREE WEEKS IN A REFUGEE TRAIN

MY journey in December 1917 had been an ideal trip compared with our slow progress now and the state in which we found the railways. Refugee trains such as ours, all coming from the west, completely blocked the lines. Famine and want had forced their unfortunate passengers to sell their earthly goods and chattels in Russia and start with their families for Siberia, in the hope of finding work and food. The Government had undertaken their transport but had made no arrangements of any kind for their ultimate disposal. Whenever they reached a town they found that the local Soviet had put up large notices, saying that in *their* district there was neither land nor any possibility of housing any refugees. These poor people were therefore moved on and on up the Trans-Siberian line. The trains were kept for weeks at small stations where it was often impossible to obtain any food.

When we were at Ekaterinburg there were said to be 20,000 refugees living in trains. At a junction further on, Kamyshloff, there were still more. The original idea was said to have been to keep the people moving till they found some charitably minded town that was able to house them. But the fighting up the line, where the revolt of the Czech legions was by now a very serious menace to the Bolshevik

authorities, prevented the trains ever reaching less densely inhabited regions.

The whole of the population of Russia was represented among the refugees. Here were pure Russians, Poles, and Tartars whose Mongolian features distinguished them sharply from the rest. There were people of every social standing, but peasants predominated. Their clothing was so faded and tattered that neither its original colour nor shape could be more than guessed at. At Ekaterinburg I even saw a Roumanian gypsy family, who had evidently strayed into Russia after the Germans had advanced into their country, and had wandered aimlessly on till they had reached Siberia. The mother, a beautiful young woman, crouched on the ground holding two tiny babies in her arms. The many-coloured rags she wore were a most inadequate covering. Her chest and arms were bare, and she drew her bright shawl first over her head, then over her shoulders, moaning low, either from pain, or to hint at the misery she could not express, for the poor soul could not speak a single word of Russian! A pretty little girl of about five, black-eyed and curly-haired, wearing only a short red chemise, went about at the station restaurant begging by gesture, only too glad to pick up the crusts of bread thrown to her by the soldiers who sat at the tables. The whole of the station, besides the trains, was also filled with refugees. They sat and laid on the floors everywhere, and the authorities did nothing to assist them. The railway company had been ordered by the Soviet to pay a small sum daily to each traveller, but of course, in practice and with such vast numbers, this was impossible.

Those who were in the trains drawn up at the station were luckier in a way. Though they were all packed into cattle-trucks they knew that they would be moved one day! They looked upon the

train as a home. They washed themselves and their clothes at the railway pump. On the journey, when at last the trains were moved, many cooked their food during the long halts, over fires built up on the ground *between* the carriages! This was not forbidden, notwithstanding its danger, as everyone did whatever he wished in this reign of disorder.

The infant mortality was immense among the refugees. Nearly every day sad little processions were seen: some poor people dressed in their best, carrying a small coffin, or sometimes only a cardboard box, with the remains of a puny baby that had succumbed to cold and hunger. Though it was now June the nights were still very chilly. Dysentery, and other diseases of that nature, claimed many victims among the small inhabitants of the trains. Later on spotted typhus broke out, and was propagated by the vermin engendered by the unutterable, indescribable filth of the trucks. Besides the refugees, the trains were also full of *meshetchniki* (bagmen). These were peasants who came from the Russian famine districts to get flour in Siberia and take it back to their starving families. These bagmen simply fought to board the returning trains, all clinging to huge bags from which they would not be separated. Nothing could be done to dislodge these men! They had travelled for thousands of miles in order to get this precious flour, and no orders forbidding them to carry goods in this way were of any avail. They knew that every *pood* (40 lbs.) of corn meant days of life for their children and they were ready to defend their sacks at the cost of their lives.

Our party was comparatively lucky in having the whole of our van to ourselves. We were only seventeen persons, men and women, instead of the regulation "40 men—or 8 horses."

Some well-wisher had scrawled in chalk upon our

carriage that " 17 servants of the Tyrant Nicholas II " were travelling in it. This became the cause of much hostile comment at our stopping-places, as can be well imagined. The " 17 servants " comprised Gibbes and Gilliard, Mademoiselle Tegleva and myself, as well as maids, footmen, and cooks. It was a varied company: the Tobolsk " odd man " side by side with the Empress's second dresser, M. G. Toutelberg, quite unable at first, poor soul, to grasp the changed situation, but later, when facing actual danger, developing quite unsuspected resourcefulness and courage. There was the fat, clean-shaven butler, in his blue frock-coat, sitting disconsolately on his bag, gazing straight before him but quite alert whenever one of the other servants appealed to his superior judgment, when his opinion, expressed with befitting dignity, was received with respectful attention. It was strange to me to see how these men maintained, perhaps unconsciously, the customary household discipline. Not only did they treat the butler with due consideration, but were always most attentive to us, trying their best to make things more comfortable, carrying the water, working the pump, offering us a taste of their best morsels, poor stuff though it might be.

The under servants were footmen, cooks, and the maids of Mademoiselle Schneider and Countess Hendrikoff—frightened, consumptive creatures, whose racking cough and gasping breath were heard at night by all the inmates of our car. One of the cooks, a thin, dark man—he was " the sauce-artist," he told me—seemed to be a wit. He kept the party in fits of laughter by his sallies, but the best, seemingly, were not for our ears, for they were delivered in a lowered voice, and though they were greeted with much merriment, restraining glances were thrown in our direction. There was not much laughter, though.

In the woods near Ekaterinburg.
(The Emperor and Empress were driven from Tobolsk to Tyumen in similar conveyances.

Tartars beside their wares, waiting for customers in the market place of a small Siberian town.

The Imperial family in 1916.

From left to right
The Grand Duchesses Tatiana, Anastasia, Marie, Olga, the Emperor, the Empress and the Cesarevitch Alexei.

(After a photo in the collection of Ste. Russie, 32 bis Rue Lacépède, Paris V.)

Refugees camping in the woods along the Trans-Siberian.

Countess Anastasia Vassilievna Hendrikoff and the Author
(Jan. 1917)

The Cesarevitch Alexei and " Joy " in 1914 and 1916.

A Chinese and a Russian officer at the Manchurian frontier.

Skating on the river at Irkutsk.

Débris of a passenger train wrecked by Bolshevik bands.

Sir Alfred Knox and his A.D.C. Captain V. A. Cazalet.

Czech soldiers travelling in the only kind of car in general use on the Trans-Siberian in 1918.

A railway bridge wrecked by the Bolsheviks.

Chinese travellers waiting at a wayside station.

Apart from the utter discomfort that surrounded them, those poor people had enough to make them feel sad and dejected. They had lost their situations and their hopes of a pension. All had large families and were trained to no other kind of work. Wherever they might go in search of employment their past would be counted against them. Their future was dark indeed, but they spoke little about their personal troubles. They had followed their Emperor voluntarily into exile, and his fate dwarfed all their own anxieties in their minds.

They had all managed to get back the luggage they had taken with them to Ekaterinburg, and their numerous boxes and bundles took up half of the van. During part of each day picnic cooking went on, the iron stove in a corner of the car being used for this. The men-servants managed to get a little firewood, and the smell of frying potatoes generally pervaded our abode for as long as the " odd man's " supply of them lasted. He had had the original idea of taking a bulky bag of this useful vegetable along with his other belongings, and this foresight proved to be a godsend to him and his comrades.

Only the pillows and rugs that Gilliard and Gibbes had with them made it possible for us to get a little sleep at night on the hard benches. We had got quite stiff from sitting on them during the day. We ought to have reached Tyumen on the day after we left Ekaterinburg had our journey followed the usual course. It proved to be otherwise, and we had to stay in our van for two more weeks !

We kept it fairly clean by sweeping the floor daily with brooms made of branches which we gathered—without permission—in the woods near the stations. We were in great dread of being invaded by vermin from the neighbouring cars. Our personal toilet was rudimentary and more or less public. The

pump used for supplying the engine had to supply us with washing water. An enamel basin, owned by Mr. Gibbes, rendered the greatest service, being used both for personal washing purposes and for laundry. Sometimes, when some of the occupants left the car, we curtained off a corner with the aid of blankets and indulged in more thorough ablutions in turns.

There were dozens of stoppages daily. The train crawled at some twelve to fifteen miles an hour and stopped, sometimes for days, at stations. Many of our neighbours were nearly starving, and the children went about begging for food. If they thought the train would stop for a long time the refugees went out to forage in the neighbourhood, but often they came back without any spoil. It was always somewhat risky to leave the train, for everything was so irregular that it might suddenly be started, and they would have no hope of being able to board another. At the best there was only *one* refugee train every four or five days!

The station refreshment rooms had all long ago been completely ransacked. For economical reasons the servants used to patronise the soup kitchens that the Swedish Red Cross had opened at some of the stations for the use of German prisoners of war returning home. The people in charge of these soup kitchens used sometimes to take pity on the refugees, and if they had anything over would sell it to them. Everyone came with whatever receptacle he or she possessed, to receive a bowl of hot greyish liquid with plenty of vegetables, among which floated a few black specks—supposed to be atoms of meat! This broth was not very nourishing, but was a decided improvement on the sodden grey bread and pale unappetising sausage, of mysterious origin, which was all we could buy for much money at the shops. I was most grateful when the servants brought me my rations,

for with wonderful ideas of court etiquette in their heads they would not allow me to stand in the queues to get it. They said it was unsuited to " my rank " ! Everything at all the stations showed utter neglect ; even the letter-boxes disgorged their contents, evidently not having been cleared for weeks. Letter-writing was now a useless pastime !

We passed whole rows of broken-down second- and first-class carriages standing at stations on the way. Many of these were burned by the soldiers later, as they were considered undemocratic. Sometimes a new first-class carriage stood apart : clean, trim, the blinds down. It awaited some important Kommissar going on inspection down the line.

Large numbers of military trains passed us, bound east, full of Bolshevik troops sent to stem the Czech advance. These troops consisted mostly of sailors, Letts, and former German prisoners of war. Many of the latter had openly rejoiced at the Bolshevik revolution. Even at Tobolsk I had heard that some of the men had boasted that when *they* returned home the same thing would happen in Germany. Perhaps these very men took part in bringing about the fulfilment of their own prophecy a few months later !

We had several adventures, some dangerous, some ludicrous. In the first category must be counted a narrow escape from railway thieves.

At one of the stations, where the train stopped for several hours, the engine-driver passed down word to the passengers that the whole night would be spent there. We saw an empty carriage on the line opposite ours, and someone suggested that we might move into it for the night. Gilliard, Gibbes, A. A. Tegleva, M. G. Toutelberg and I could not resist the temptation of getting away, if only for a few hours, from the close atmosphere of our van. We prepared for a good night's rest. To ensure our not being

disturbed we not only locked the door from inside but tied it up securely with ropes fastened to the handles. As the carriage was unlit it could pass from outside as being empty, and being locked, we hoped no one looking for accommodation would take the trouble to investigate so late at night if this were the case or not. However, the very fact that it was locked attracted an element we had not counted upon—railway thieves. In the middle of the night we were wakened by hearing a rattling at the door and muffled voices. "There are surely valuable goods in here," a voice whispered, "it is locked." "Hand a jemmy here, won't you," another hoarse voice answered.

Monsieur Gilliard, Mademoiselle Toutelberg, and I tiptoed to the door. Mademoiselle Toutelberg was valiant and was for parleying with the men, but we first tried to prevent their entry by setting our backs against the door and holding it literally for dear life. The jemmy made short work with the lock, but the ropes held, mercifully, and we heard the thieves swearing in disgust. "There must be some kind of special iron bolt inside, we ought to get a hatchet." "Idiot," the other voice said, "the noise will attract others. They will come up and then we will have to share what we find. Better try something else while we have time." They moved off. Our sighs of relief were genuine; we had not relished the idea of a hand-to-hand fight with these ruffians who were evidently well armed.

As it was now the middle of June the days were beginning to be very warm, and the want of a proper bath was a great privation. Mr. Gibbes would rush into any stream that happened to be near a station at which we stopped for any length of time. Those Siberian rivers are icy, so goodness knows into what low temperature he had dipped when he came back shivering but clean. Off and on we women tried

discreet alfresco tubbing behind some bushes near a station, but though one always stood sentry to warn off the approach of passers-by, it was not satisfactory—and cold! Once our train stopped opposite a village churchyard and we got the usual information that the stoppage would last for four hours. We knew that this meant six hours or many more. I had a brilliant idea, and suggested to my fellow-travellers that a churchyard meant a church and consequently a priest, and that I would appeal to the charity of the clergy and ask him to allow us to bath in his bath-house. He would certainly own one. Monsieur Gilliard and Mr. Gibbes were dubious. They seemed to think the proceeding strange and feared the priest would have no confidence in us! However, they agreed to accompany Mademoiselle Tegleva and myself on our expedition.

This proved to be something of an adventure, but a successful one. We discovered the priest's house, and on entering found the whole ecclesiastical family at tea. Our appearance cannot have been prepossessing, for I noticed that *Matouschka*—the priest's wife—surreptitiously removed the silver tea-spoons from the table while I harangued her husband. I tried to be as eloquent as I could. I spoke of the respect we owed to his rank, of Christian charity, of the distress of refugees travelling for three weeks in a cattle-van. I dragged in the case of two foreigners stranded in Siberia, and told him we would pay for the fuel, showing him the money. He was vacillating between his own kindness and his wife's fear lest we should bring vermin into her clean bath-house.

Happily, there was a dear old mother on the premises who suddenly became our spokeswoman. "Whoever they are, *Batiouschka*" (father), she said, "they are people in a dire plight. We do not know their names, or where they come from, but before

going to read your Vespers and ask the Lord for a sinless day, how can you refuse ?"

This turned the balance. *Batiouschka* agreed, and the worthy old lady heated the bath for us with her own hands. It did not give us the absolute bliss she had hoped, for she had hospitably stoked it up like a furnace. Neither Mademoiselle Tegleva nor I had ever indulged in the national steam bath before, and in trying to climb up to the highest shelf and steam ourselves we found it—hot! Nor did Monsieur Gilliard, I believe, feel as happy as he should have done when the men's turn came, for he also was not an *habitué*, and was not attracted by the whipping with birch twigs that the servants suggested to him as a special treat; but we were bathed at last and were loud in our gratitude.

CHAPTER IX

UNDER BOLSHEVIK RULE

TWO weeks after we had left Ekaterinburg we at last arrived at Tyumen. We were told at the station that we should not be sent any further. No reason was given for this, but we learned later that Tobolsk, which had been assigned to us as a place of exile, had overthrown the Bolsheviks some ten days after the Imperial children had been removed to Ekaterinburg. There had been no bloodshed. The population had simply declared its allegiance to the anti-Bolshevik Government that had been formed in Eastern Siberia and the Kommissars had fled. Had the Grand Duchesses been left at Tobolsk, who knows if they might not have been saved ?

There was much discussion at Tyumen as to whether we were to be arrested or not. Happily it was proved that we were harmless, so we were ordered out of the train and told to settle in the town, which we were forbidden to leave on any pretext. We were at the last actually sorry to say good-bye to our van, for there, at least, we had all been people bound together by a common interest and kindly disposed and helpful to each other. None of us knew a single soul in Tyumen. Money was scarce. The paper which we had been given by the Ekaterinburg Soviet was a kind of bill of lading, branding us as outlaws. It excluded us from all hope of getting work. All

those, even servants, who had had anything to do with the Court were looked at with suspicion if not with hatred.

Still, fate was merciful. Monsieur Gilliard chanced to meet a foreigner who heard of his plight, and gave him the address of some acquaintances of his who were eager to let their rooms to decent people, fearing that the Soviet would foist some undesirable lodgers on them. Our first attempt failed, as the people were afraid to take us in when they heard who we were. I was turned away from another place with much abuse for being a *bourgoui*, but finally we managed to find two rooms in a fairly comfortable house. In one Monsieur Gilliard took up his quarters, and in the other were Mademoiselle Tegleva, myself, and one of the maids. Mr. Gibbes settled down in another place by himself, and the servants, with much difficulty, found some miserable rooms in a distant part of the town. They were glad enough to get even this shelter, and hoped to better themselves when their antecedents should be forgotten. We were very lucky in being four together, and Monsieur Gilliard was a rock to lean on. He really played Providence to us women, and his presence and that of Mr. Gibbes was a special protection, for foreigners, and particularly republicans like Gilliard, were still treated a shade better than the Russians during the first weeks of our stay. All our names, Citizen Gilliard, Citizeness Buxhoeveden, etc., as well as those of the other inmates, were written on a black-board prominently nailed on the front door of our house; this was another leaf taken from the history of the French Revolution. As our names meant nothing to the people, we were not molested.

We had, however, still to register ourselves at the Kommissariat. This was an anxious moment, as our papers dated from pre-revolutionary days and we knew that this was always considered objectionable.

Yet there was nothing to be done but to put on a bold face. I entered the Kommissariat alone, my companions remaining in the background so as not to make it appear that we belonged to each other, in case our names, joined together, might arouse some memories and questions as to our past. The harassed individual who was at the head of the office was seemingly specially busy that day. The local Kommissar combined with other duties all the functions formerly held by the police. He was a kind of "maid-of-all-work." He saw to the registration of the inhabitants, to the orders in town, and delivered as well every possible certificate, from those allowing weak infants an extra supply of gruel and sugar to the permits for marriage and divorce.

These marriage certificates had to be supplied by the Kommissar, as the Bolshevik Government did not recognise religious marriage and no kind of civil ceremony had replaced it. The certificates were obtained without any trouble. The parties had only to appear with two witnesses, who attested that the people were not already married to anyone else, or if they had been, that they were now divorced. People could marry and be divorced as often as they liked, and no one bothered to inquire if the witnesses told the truth or not. They were not made to take the oath, and if their statement proved to be incorrect, the people were just unmarried! It was, I believe, a very cheap proceeding and cost about two shillings; but as yet only the Bolshevik soldiery availed themselves of these matrimonial facilities.

I watched these various activities till my own turn came. The assistant Kommissar studied my papers lengthily; he was a soldier and seemed to have some difficulty in reading. He stumbled painfully over my name, and at last gave a kind of phonetic rendering of it, remarking "One has to be drunk in order to

pronounce this gibberish." This witty remark caused great hilarity. I smiled ingratiatingly and hastened to repossess myself of my papers. He scribbled something in his book—I doubt if anyone could have read my address as he rendered it—and the ordeal was over. I took good care never to go near the place again, and did without all the sugar permits, etc., which could only be dispensed by the Kommissar. I thought a further examination and stamping of my passport too risky a proceeding to be repeated.

The room occupied by my two companions and myself was a tiny one. There was no furniture in it except three beds and one table. Such close quarters were sometimes rather trying, but we were a protection to each other, for there was not much safety for women in those times, though the decree for nationalisation of women, which had been passed in some parts of Russia, was not in force at Tyumen. Whenever we went out either Gilliard or Gibbes accompanied us.

The town was under martial law, and no one was allowed to walk abroad after 8 P.M. It was a great military centre of the Bolsheviks and was full of soldiery. We also met sailors from the Baltic Fleet, who played a great part all over the country after the revolution. It was the fashion among them to discard their vests and to be very *décolleté* in consequence, and the height of elegance was attained by long cap ribbons which hung down their backs, reaching nearly to the waist. They could be seen walking about with a lady on each arm, as the navy seemed to be in great favour. Both they and their lady friends openly flaunted jewellery in the form of rings and bracelets, the wearing of which was prohibited to the population. These were the men off duty. Others, with hard, intent faces, hurried about to and from the Soviet building.

We had great difficulty in providing ourselves

with food, though a market was held daily, for living had become frightfully expensive since the Soviet had fixed prices for all produce, and all wares except milk and butter were rapidly disappearing. Siberia was literally overflowing with butter, which could no longer be exported, and in some places the peasants greased their cart-wheels with it to put it to some use.

The shops were nearly as empty as those at Tobolsk had been, and people stood in endless queues before them. The Bolsheviks did not suffer from these hardships. They had special facilities for getting what they wanted, and money in abundance, so they could pay the fancy prices that the underhand dealers demanded for those articles which they still managed, in some mysterious way, to produce. The unfortunate people who were not in Bolshevik service could get no work, and these lived by selling the last of their belongings, most of which was clothing. This was now very precious, as no material could be obtained, and the Bolshevik ladies liked finery. I paid for my dinners for a whole week by the sale of a pair of new white washing gloves that I happened to have in my bag.

Every bit of material the people chanced to have was turned to account. The result was sometimes startling. I remember meeting a man wearing a suit, evidently made by his wife, which must originally have been a pair of old wine-coloured rep curtains. He did not seem to mind, and perhaps his dress was a safeguard, for in those times a man wearing a collar and a woman with a hat instead of a shawl on her head were looked upon with suspicion. It savoured of *bourgoui* tendencies, *i.e.* of counter-revolutionary sympathies. We ourselves looked like real proletarians, for our clothes, the same that we had worn all the winter, had got woefully shabby. We kept them together as best we could, often having to draw threads

out of the material to do our mending, as only white thread could be bought, and that was so expensive, ten shillings the reel, that we had to think twice before getting it. We became experts at camouflage. I used to cut up pocket-handkerchiefs to make soles for my thin silk stockings as I could not get new ones of any kind, and consoled myself with the idea that no one could guess what they looked like inside my shoes. We had to exercise the strictest economy in everything, for nobody could tell how long we might have to remain at Tyumen, and for my part the small sum of money I had was fast dwindling down, so that as time went on I sold nearly all the fittings of my dressing-bag to cover my daily expenses.

Monsieur Gilliard and I met some neutrals, among them a few Danes, who happened to be in the town. All of them I ever came in contact with during my travels in Siberia were most kind and friendly, for my father's name was well known in Denmark, but they could do nothing for us here. We could not even go and see them for fear of compromising them, but we had the comfort of knowing that if something happened to us we would at least get decent burial and our people would hear the news.

From the Danes we heard that there was truth in the report that the Czech legions, whose original intention had been simply to fight the Bolsheviks in order to force their way through the country to their homes, had been joined by anti-Bolshevik Amur Cossacks. This combined army was advancing towards Tyumen from Omsk, but as the usual lies, proclaiming great victories, filled the Bolshevik news-telegrams posted up at the street corners, no one knew the real state of affairs. We just had to be patient and wait for events to develop. We knew nothing about Ekaterinburg and were unable to communicate with anyone. We dared not own to each other the

anxiety we felt for the Imperial Family's fate should Ekaterinburg be taken by the Czechs. Would the prisoners be taken away, or what would happen to them if the town were surrounded and the Bolsheviks became desperate ?

In order to find some kind of occupation for both of us I spent most of the day teaching Monsieur Gilliard English, and we worked at it from morning to night. We went for our dinner to a local restaurant much in vogue among the soldiers. Here for a very high price we got a plate of cabbage soup and a piece of beef. It was a wretched place. Everything which could easily be taken away by the clients had long ago been dispensed with. The deal tables had no cloths, wooden spoons and two-pronged steel forks had replaced their vanished plated brethren. The crockery was none too clean, but the food was abundant. This was particularly appreciated when our financial straits allowed us the luxury of a restaurant dinner only every second day. On the intermediate days we lived chiefly on tea and eggs. The place, of course, was full of soldiers and their ladies, and the smell of foul tobacco and leather boots mingled with sour cabbage filled the unaired rooms, and we generally tried to sit on the veranda. The frightened waitresses ran about attending to the orders of the soldiers, who spent recklessly, eating and drinking the most expensive items on the menu. It was impossible for a respectable woman to enter the restaurant unescorted. I only once attempted this, but some ten minutes later had to escape by a door at the back with the help of a friendly waitress.

The evenings we spent at home, sitting all together, for we had to be very careful of our small stock of candles, for which we had to pay dear. Our rooms had no electric light, and we could only allow ourselves the luxury of lighting one candle for a couple of hours.

We went to bed early, undressing in the dark, and those long sleepless nights were not the least of our trials.

We saw little of our hosts. They were busy, for they had to do most of their housework themselves. Servants, as a class, had disappeared, and were besides a great danger. Denunciations were well paid for by the Bolsheviks, and if you displeased your servant there was always a risk that she would go and denounce her employers to the authorities and in that way add some extra roubles to her pay. People were arrested on the slightest plea. A woman I knew was heavily fined, and barely escaped imprisonment, for having told her coachman to address her as "barinia" (mistress), and not "citizeness." Her housemaid went to the Soviet and reported this, and it sufficed for a charge of counter-revolutionary tendencies to be filed against her.

We heard of constant arrests for quite unimportant reasons. The Soviet system of getting money for their wants by levying a contribution on the townspeople had worked very successfully at first, but as no one could touch his bank deposits, and all private accounts at the banks were stopped by a previous decree of the Soviet, the people had not the wherewithal to pay up any more. It was then that the arrests of the richer classes began. Merchants and the *bourgeoisie* were put into prison for even the slightest infringement of the regulations, and their relations, knowing the treatment they would be exposed to, hastened to pay bail for them. As there was no ready money available, their womenfolk sold the last bits of jewellery they still possessed, but paid whatever was the sum demanded.

Gradually the arrests extended also to less prominent people, and towards the end of the Bolsheviks' rule even the foreign subjects were not exempted

from this risk. Several men I knew were taken to prison, and even the wife of the oldest British resident in Tyumen, Mrs. X, spent three days in the women's gaol, being held responsible for her husband's absence. Her telegrams to the British Consul at Omsk asking for his help were not sent off, and the other foreigners had difficulty in proving that Mr. X, being an eight days' journey away from Tyumen, could not instantly appear when he was sent for.

All the prisons were over-filled in consequence of these methods. Instead of four or five inmates in every cell there was usually thrice the number. No distinction was made as to sex, men and women being huddled together in one room. When they were taken for their outings in the courtyard the soldiers jeered at them, and if any prisoner dared to answer back he was threatened with immediate execution. In order to keep the prisoners in salutary awe of the authorities this was even rehearsed sometimes, and once, so an eye-witness told me, only a warder's presence of mind saved their lives. On this occasion the men were awakened late at night and ordered to get up and prepare to go out, as they were to be shot. They were all led out and drawn up in a line along the outer wall and asked for their last messages to their relations, as the detachment that was to put the sentence into execution was already on the way. The poor people waited for about an hour for the arrival of this detachment, but instead an officer from the Soviet appeared, who announced that there had been a mistake and that the execution was put off for another day. The relief on hearing this after the intolerable suspense of the last hour was such that one of the prisoners, a strong man of some thirty-five years, fainted outright.

It appeared that the chief of the prison was drunk when he gave the order for the execution, and that

one of the warders, seeing his condition, sped to the Soviet, where he luckily found a member on duty. That man, not having heard of any order for this wholesale murder, sent the officer to stop it.

The prisoners' relations were allowed to provide them with food, but the gaolers, fearing that some communication might be hidden in the dishes that were brought for them from their homes, generally poured the whole dinner into a dirty pail, which was then taken to their cells. In consequence of this, not only did bread, meat, and pudding swim in the soup, but the soldiery often amused themselves by adding cigarette stumps and even other still less appetising items to the mess, till it became quite unfit for human consumption. One of the arrested men's wives, who saw it, told me this, and said that the gaolers' behaviour was so disgusting that she had to send a message to her husband begging him not to touch the food she had brought him, and her fear was not that he had remained hungry but that the message had not been delivered and that he had eaten his unsavoury dinner.

Trials were a farce. There were no longer any regular law courts ; the old penal code was abolished and no other existed. For every kind of offence people were brought before a revolutionary tribunal, the members of which were all appointed by the Soviet and consisted almost exclusively of Red guardsmen. These men were instructed to give their judgments according to their " revolutionary conscience," as there were no staple laws. Their conscience always prompted them to apply totally different punishments to the proletariat and to the intelligentsia for the same offence. Capital punishment was a frequent sentence. The accused had not the right to choose his own counsel. " The Public Defender," usually a soldier appointed by the Soviet, was his spokesman. At

Tyumen the Public Defender was the owner of a small restaurant. We often saw him looking after his customers, having evidently just come back from a trial, as he still wore a band on his arm on which his official title was written in red letters. His appearance could not inspire any confidence and he had no legal qualification whatever, but perhaps, as he was an innkeeper and these people have generally a professional geniality, he may have been more humane than the others.

CHAPTER X

THE PENDULUM SWINGS ROUND

MOST of the population lived in a great state of tension, produced by the laws and restrictions, so numerous that it was difficult to follow them, and the slightest infringement of which meant imprisonment. For us there was, besides, the dread of being permanently cut off from Ekaterinburg should the White Army [1] surround Tyumen.

Up to now no series of executions had taken place as in other towns. The local Soviet was evidently considered too mild, for towards the end of June the former president of the Omsk Soviet, a man renowned for his cruelty, arrived, and was promptly elected by the soldiers to the same post at Tyumen. This man, Schebaldin, became the all-powerful ruler of our destinies from this time on to the taking of the town by the Czechs three weeks later. I met him several times in the street. His face was typical of the class that was then in power. He was clean-shaven ; his long, lank, black hair half veiled a broad high forehead, and his dark sparkling eyes had a hard and piercing look which gave something diabolical to his expression. People maintained that Schebaldin was not quite sane, and the decrees he issued seemed to support the idea. These decrees numbered twenty-nine, and

[1] The combined forces of Czechs and the anti-Bolshevik armies were known by this name.

they followed each other in quick succession. In the first he ordered the arrest of all former officers, threatening those who tried to evade it with capital punishment. All the other decrees were full of the same threat. "To be relentlessly shot" followed the mention of every possible offence. These outpourings were interlarded with the usual sentences about the "Glorious Red Revolution," international ideals, etc. It seemed strange to see these decrees, which held a death sentence for so many people, stuck up beside placards advertising cinemas and balls. The Bolsheviks were extremely fond of dancing, and, curiously enough, whenever there were rumours of Bolshevik reverses a placard announcing a public ball would immediately appear. Of course the curfew restriction of 8 P.M. did not hold good for these.

After Schebaldin's advent no one was safe. We had to restrict our walks, fearing to attract attention by our "Petrograd look," which still excited some comment from people in the streets. We several times had narrow escapes from being arrested. On the very night after our arrival at our lodgings, a party of soldiers invaded the house for a domiciliary visit. The first room they entered happened to be ours. We were so completely exhausted after our weeks of sleepless nights in the van that neither Mademoiselle Tegleva nor I woke up when the men came in, though their entrance was by no means noiseless. They marched up to our beds and made some unavailing attempts to rouse us. Seeing that this seemed a hopeless task, they remarked that we were probably drunk and had better be left alone, as we should not be able to answer coherently when we woke up! The bareness of the room and our battered bags evidently gave them the impression that we were proletarian relations of the owners of the house. They examined the first bag they hit upon, contemptuously tossed

aside the worn-out clothing it contained, and went away to continue their search in the rest of the house. Our hosts evidently managed to convince the men that they possessed nothing of any value and had no anti-Bolshevik tendencies, so the dreaded visit passed off successfully.

Fortunately, none of the party chanced to fall upon our papers, for most certainly the presence of several members of the Emperor's household on the premises would have aroused suspicion as to the truth of our hosts' assertions, and they would have disbelieved them had they even sworn that they did not know of our antecedents.

Another time we spent a most uncomfortable day after my chance meeting with one of the most militant of the Ekaterinburg sub-Kommissars. I went to the railway station, and as I was opening the heavy door leading to the restaurant, it was pushed open from the other side. My feelings can be imagined when I saw myself face to face with this Kommissar! As the man knew that we were supposed by the Ekaterinburg authorities to be in exile at Tobolsk, my walking about in Tyumen might strike him as unlawful. What if he thought it his duty to report the fact to his chiefs? Dire would be the results! He looked at me, but I saw no signs of recognition in his eyes. Was he going to follow me, or would he instruct the Soviet to find out my address? We could be traced easily in such a small place. My memory proved to be better than the Kommissar's, for he evidently did not know me, and no search was made for me. Had I been arrested, all our party would certainly have shared my fate, for a few days after this incident I saw a harmless clerk I knew—a foreigner—being marched down the street between two soldiers. He was soon set free; but it was symptomatic.

Most of the foreigners, and all the townspeople

who could do so, managed to leave Tyumen by stealth, generally at night. Their houses and belongings were immediately confiscated, and Schebaldin promulgated a new decree, threatening to shoot anyone who was caught leaving the town. Pickets were placed at every exit. Among the people who fled were the brothers Kolokolnikoff, immensely rich merchants who had built and endowed a splendid commercial school and had always spent great sums on the charities of the town. The whole family left, except two young boys of seventeen and fourteen, the sons of one of the brothers, who were still at school. On them Schebaldin vented his rage at having lost his wealthiest prey. When these poor boys refused to disclose their parents' whereabouts, they were imprisoned, and when they still disclaimed any knowledge on cross-examination, Schebaldin had them shot in cold blood, having previously submitted them to the most inhuman treatment. Their bodies were thrown down a deep well, where they were found after the Bolsheviks' retreat.

Seething indignation now spread to all classes. Schebaldin was not content with "bleeding" the merchants, but turned his attention to the rich peasantry. He sent detachments of Red guards into the villages to requisition foodstuffs for his army. In order to soften the blow he decreed that the rich peasants' land should be divided among the "village proletariat." In the paper in which this order was given, he said that all priests found inciting the peasants to disregard his orders should be shot by his men without trial. This infuriated the rural population. At a sitting of the Soviet the peasant members lodged a protest against Schebaldin's decree, which they considered an encroachment on their rights of self-government. They were out-voted, left the Soviet in a body, and did not return. From that moment the Soviet

consisted only of soldiers and workmen, and these did what they liked.

I heard an echo of the public mind in the street one day as I stopped, ostensibly to read a poster, but in reality to hear what an elderly peasant was saying in low tones to a knot of people assembled around him. These were small shopkeepers and peasants who listened attentively to his words. To my astonishment he was denouncing the Bolsheviks. He was speaking of the murder of the young Kolokolnikoffs and holding it up as a proof of the senseless injustice that was going on. He went on to say, " We peasants have money in plenty, it is true, but what can we get for it ? The shops are empty. We can neither build houses nor till our ground, for we have neither material nor instruments. Our wives cannot get any stuff to clothe our children. To get a single pair of shoes we have to spend what in former times would have kept a whole family for a month. We were promised that war should end, and the war is still going on, and the worst war we have ever seen, for now the Bolsheviks are fighting our own brothers. Truly we must say that we have never seen worse times than these, and we can only hope we shall soon be rid of the whole lot up there." He pointed to the Soviet building. His listeners assented, but as their voices got louder the sentry in front of the building ordered them to disperse instantly as, under martial law, no public meetings could be held. The crowd obeyed, of course, but went away muttering so loudly that it was a sure proof that the regime was tottering.

Towards the middle of July the news of the taking of Yaloutorovsk by the Czechs had filtered through. The town was quite close to Tyumen. Ambulance trains filled with wounded arrived daily. As the Soviet could not announce any victories and still wished in some way to fan the warlike spirit of the

civil population, they decided that the funeral of the men who had fallen in battle should be the occasion of a great political demonstration. Placards were posted up announcing that the funeral of the fallen comrades was to take place on the next day with the utmost ceremony. The spot chosen as their burial-ground, where their memory was to be ever present in the minds of the citizens, was a pretty little square in the centre of the town. It had just been laid out by the German prisoners of war, some of whom were excellent gardeners. These men had lavished much loving care on it, and it actually possessed flower-beds, a rarity in those parts. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the water reservoir of the town lay quite close to this square. The Bolsheviks never troubled their heads about this, and the bodies, which were not properly buried, poisoned the water, and thus were said to be the cause of the subsequent cholera epidemic.

On the day of the funeral the route the procession was to follow was lined with troops, while all the town authorities assembled at the station to meet the funeral train. At the last moment it became known that there were twice the number of dead that had been expected. In consequence the number of coffins that had been prepared was not sufficient, and the whole stock at the local undertakers had to be hastily requisitioned. As they could not supply the necessary quantity of coffins for men, coffins for women were taken to make up the deficiency. The gaudy pink and white " shells " that the taste of the local inhabitants demanded for their female relatives did not look very suitable, but perhaps no worse than the red boxes that had been prepared by the Soviet. The horrible impression these produced was heightened by the fact that the red paint was still fresh and left red stains on everything that touched it. When the train arrived there was the greatest difficulty in putting the bodies

into the coffins, which were mostly too small. It was a gruesome picture when the open coffins, out of which arms and legs protruded, were carried down the street. The whole crowd stood silent. If the Bolsheviks had wished to create an impression that would be fatal to the idea of civic funerals they were certainly successful. Even the least religious people looked on aghast at the horrible sight. When the procession started it was even worse, for the jolts made the dead men's limbs move about as if there were still some life left in the poor creatures! One of the chiefs requested the crowd to show their patriotism by helping the soldiers to carry their dead comrades, but no one volunteered. Anything reminiscent of a religious ceremony was carefully avoided, and no priest was allowed to approach the grave. The band played the "Marseillaise," which, after the revolution, was only considered in the light of the first song of liberty and not at all as the French National Anthem, and this was followed by the usual "International." Before the bodies were committed to the earth a political meeting was held. The outpourings on this occasion surpassed even the usual oratory, so great was the speakers' desire to stir up popular indignation against the Czechs and against the *bourgeois* who were supposed to be acting with them. One fanatic went so far as to suggest arresting and shooting all the people living in one street, first in the houses with even numbers, then in those with odd ones. The next street should follow, and so on, till the population should be imbued with salutary fear! Happily this bloodthirsty demand was not put into execution. As it was toned down it only resulted in a series of arrests.

The situation was getting desperate. The proximity of the White Army resulted in very few peasants coming to market. They one and all refused to take the currency in use by the Bolsheviks, and demanded

to be paid in old Tsar money for their wares, of which there was scarcely any to be found in the place. We seriously asked ourselves if hunger would not be added to everything else. Happily Monsieur Gilliard had proved himself to be most far-sighted. A couple of weeks previously he had surreptitiously managed to buy several large round cheeses for us, in case of emergency. These he gallantly agreed to keep in his own bedroom, as we had no choice between this and our female dormitory, and to have them there was impossible as the room was so small. The weather was warm, and the cheeses ripened, and by this time poor Monsieur Gilliard was acutely aware of their presence. However, we were delighted to attack them, and they became our staple food.

The Bolsheviks now forbade the ringing of church bells. It was feared that they might be signals. The last Germans had also left, only their Red Cross representative remaining in the soldiers' camp. There had been several German officers on the Bolshevik staff, and others, who had been prisoners of war, lived in the town, waiting to be sent home. At the beginning of our stay we saw some of those connected with the Soviet staff driving about with their German orderly sitting on the box. The departure of the Germans was another sign of the approach of the Czechs, who were, of course, on the side of the Allies, and into whose hands the Germans were not anxious to fall.

Great excitement became noticeable among the Soviet people. Men on horseback were stationed before the staff building day and night. Several of the most important Kommissars left—it was officially given out, for instructions—and subordinates were left in charge. One morning the whole of the market-place was surrounded by soldiers and everybody was ordered to produce his or her papers. Some of the women had left theirs at home, and were taken

to the Soviet nearly frantic with terror. After their identity had been established they were released. It appeared that the reason for this raid was that the Bolsheviks heard of the presence in the town of a reconnoitring party of Cossacks. Not a single one was captured, and the next day a poster was stuck up on one of the houses on the outskirts, in which it was said that twelve Cossacks had been in the town on the previous day and that they had now safely returned to their unit. The poster was signed " The Cossacks " !

After the fifteenth of July we heard distant firing from time to time—the sound of the Czechs' artillery. Would the town be besieged and shelled, and would the Bolsheviks defend it to the last, as they proclaimed ? The thought of the shelling of a town consisting mainly of wooden buildings was not too encouraging. Besides, the Bolsheviks usually completely lost their heads when they were hard pressed and made short work of all non-Bolsheviks on whom they could lay their hands. But at least events were coming to a climax. Anything was better than living under the cloud of impending catastrophe as we had been doing.

On the evening of July 19 all the inhabitants of the streets leading to the Toura[1] were kept awake by the rattle of carts rapidly travelling up and down. Mounted men were heard clattering by at a great pace, shouting orders. People living near the Soviet saw the building brilliantly lighted up and soldiers, carrying great bundles, loading carts outside it. We sat up, as did most of the townsfolk, and late in the evening a loud tapping was heard at the front door. Our landlady's boy hastened to open it. Some sailors stood outside it asking to see the owner of the house. The boy demurred, but they were evidently in a great hurry. They told him that they had no time to lose, and that he should immediately produce all the horses there were in the stables. The boy answered that

[1] Tyumen lies on this river.

these had been confiscated long ago. The sailors went to inspect, and finding some harness, possessed themselves of it and hurried away. When I looked out of the window later on I saw the same party leading a fine grey horse which they must have got from somewhere farther on.

Afterwards a batch of soldiers came and asked if there were any silver in the house. This also had already been requisitioned, so they contented themselves with some metal coffee-pots, being evidently in such a hurry that they took the first thing they saw. Most of the houses in the town had such visits and the noise in the street lasted the best part of the night.

When we awoke next morning not a sound was to be heard. The landlady's boy, when he went out to reconnoitre, saw an empty street. Even the Bolshevik sentry usually posted at the corner had disappeared. The boy ventured farther, and in a quarter of an hour rushed back, shouting at the top of his voice, " They are gone, gone ! " so loud that the neighbours heard him. All the windows opened. Heads appeared ; men and women ran out. People would not believe at first that the news was really true, for the Bolsheviks had reigned more than six months at Tyumen, but already posters had been put up on the main street, signed by the old Town Council, announcing that it had temporarily taken over the administration.

It appeared that on that night the remaining Kommissars, knowing that the town was being surrounded, had decided to avail themselves of the only means of escape open to them, and had all embarked in the steamers that they had kept in readiness during the last fortnight. All the money in the banks and government offices, all their most important papers, as well as all the valuable stores they could possibly take away, were shipped on the thirty-seven steamers lying in the river. When the members of the Soviet

were on board, the soldiers, both in the barracks and in the trains in the station, did not see the good of being left behind to fight, so the whole lot left simultaneously. To this was due the fact that the end of the Bolsheviks' rule was unaccompanied by any bloodshed. Strangely enough, before leaving the town, Schebaldin had himself gone to the prison and had given the order to set all its inmates free. This order included ordinary offenders as well as the political prisoners and the people kept as hostages. Some said that this sudden access of humanity was the result of a misunderstanding, as Schebaldin had been expecting the arrival of a detachment of soldiers to execute such people as he should select. These soldiers had preferred to board the steamers, being afraid of being left behind if they came too late, and had never appeared, so that Schebaldin had given the order for all the prisons to be emptied.

The Town Council immediately formed a kind of militia from among the inhabitants to keep order until the Czechs' arrival. The streets were full of people who were in such a state of excitement that men and women who had never met before talked with animation to each other, relating their experiences and inquiring the latest news of the Czechs. Friends embraced each other as they do at Easter. All that day carts kept arriving full of young men, whose bearing proclaimed them to be former officers, coming to offer their services. As every cart passed the crowd broke out into loud cheers. Towards evening it became nearly impossible to squeeze through the street, for the White Army's vanguard was expected at any moment. Many of the women carried flowers, and every window and balcony was tightly packed with people. A little after 8 P.M. a band of horsemen rode slowly up the High Street. The Cossacks! It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm of the people

at that moment. The crowd went wild. Women wept, men threw their caps in the air. With the greatest difficulty the Cossacks were able to advance. Officers headed each detachment. Men and horses were nearly spent with fatigue, for after several days' battle they had advanced in forced marches for two whole days in order to make a sudden descent on Tyumen and forestall its final looting by the Bolsheviks. Though the men were dusty and travel-stained and their horses bore witness to a thirty miles' ride that day, they had still kept the outward appearance of regular troops which their predecessors had decidedly lacked, and officers and men wore the old Cossack uniform. The townspeople organised a banquet for them on their arrival. Carts had gone round from house to house to collect food. All those who were asked gave what they could, and one could realise the relief felt at the change by the quantities of every kind that were given. Even the poorest people contributed something, and though it was a Sabbath and the Jews could not cook on that day, the Jewish community, wishing to show their share in the general rejoicing, sent their Sabbath wheaten loaves as their offering. I believe the Cossacks sat down that night to a repast such as they had not dreamt of for a very long time.

The red Soviet flag had been hauled down, and now the white and green flag of the Independent Siberian Government was flown on all the flagstaffs. These colours had been chosen by the Directorate—the name by which the Independent Siberian Government at Omsk had called itself—to symbolise the snows and woods of Siberia. The new flag fluttering over the buildings was the outward sign of the end of Bolshevism. Alas! this did not last. The next year saw the Bolsheviks reinstated, this time to stay till the present day.

CHAPTER XI

THE NEW ORDER

THE main contingent of the White Army arrived in the course of the next day, and quite a respectable force was quartered in Tyumen. The Cossacks, in hot pursuit of their enemy, left the very day after their entry into the town. They were eager to capture some of the Bolshevik chiefs, but of course these had long ago prudently got out of harm's way. Ekaterinburg, being an important railway centre, was now the Czechs' goal. The Bolsheviks had concentrated their forces around this town, and their opponents encountered stubborn resistance. Before it at last fell every large railway station on the line had to be separately taken.

At Tyumen the newly appointed Cossack commander of the town confirmed the Town Council in its rights and reinstated those of the Kerensky functionaries who were still on the spot. All nationalised house property was returned to its owners by the new administration. Nothing could describe the state of utter ruin and neglect into which a few months of Bolshevik occupation could reduce a house. It seemed as if the men who were quartered in it had wantonly splintered the doors, cracked the floors, and broken the windows, without ever thinking of repairing the damage they had done. Orders were given to return all property for which their present

possessors could not legally account, but not many things that had been taken were found again. Most of the property that had been stolen (or requisitioned) had been taken away by the Bolsheviks in their flight. This was particularly the case with horses and conveyances. During the first days after the change of regime hardly a horse was seen in the streets.

The law courts were very busy; thieves and murderers had spent a pleasant and profitable time for several months and now had to render account. Some of the new institutions the Bolsheviks had introduced remained, however. Trade unions and workmen's exchanges were maintained as they had proved their utility, but except for this everything settled back into the former groove.

I do not think the sight of the very first boat that ever sailed the Toura can have caused a greater flutter of excitement than did the arrival of the first steamer from Omsk. During the months of Bolshevik rule there had been no movement whatever on the river, except for the rafts of wood that the Tartars steered down it, directing their progress by the aid of long poles. The way these rafts were unloaded was very ingenious, and I used to sit and watch by the hour. Each huge tree trunk had a noose of rope tied round it, by means of which it was fastened to a horse's collar. Small Tartar urchins, in the scantiest of clothing, rode the horses barebacked into the water close to the rafts, and then when the logs had been secured rushed their steeds up the bank at a furious pace. Leaving their load on the shore, they immediately rode down again to fetch a second log, and so on. It seemed to be a favourite pastime, for rows of amateurs stood waiting for their turn. That kind of bathing combined with horsemanship was continued till autumn, and must have been the cause of many colds.

Ekaterinburg was taken by the White forces on July 25. Nothing was said about the Imperial Family's fate in the brief announcement of the event that we read in the telegrams, for real newspapers had actually appeared again. Monsieur Gilliard and Mr. Gibbes availed themselves of the first military train that was run down the line to go to Ekaterinburg. I had to remain behind, as women were not allowed to travel by these trains. Gilliard returned in a few days' time (Mr. Gibbes remained at Ekaterinburg). He brought bad news. He had found no trace whatever of either the Imperial Family or our colleagues. All had disappeared. There were rumours that the Emperor had been murdered. Notwithstanding all his efforts, he could get no reliable information as to what had really happened. Monsieur Gilliard heard some details of the Imperial Family's detention at Ekaterinburg (as I also did later) from the Emperor's valet, Tchemodouroff. The man had been saved by having fallen ill and being taken from the Ipatieff house to the prison infirmary. From him we learned of the terrible hardships that the Emperor and Empress had to bear during the six weeks that elapsed from the arrival of the Emperor's children at Ekaterinburg to the fatal 16th of July, the date of their disappearance. Yet, said Tchemodouroff, they bore it all with the same courage and dignity that they had shown through their imprisonment, being only concerned for the people about them. They were at the absolute mercy of their gaolers, who spared them no humiliation they could devise. They had only three rooms at their disposal. The Cesarevitch slept in his parents' bedroom, all the Grand Duchesses being together in the second room, while in the third, the dining-sitting room, Dr. Botkine spent the night. All the doors were removed from their hinges to enable the guards to look into the rooms whenever they wished. The

presence of the coarse, noisy soldiery in such close proximity—they occupied the rooms adjoining those of the Emperor and his family—was a great trial to the ladies. The family suffered from actual want; food was scarce and bad, was brought at irregular hours, and sometimes forgotten altogether.

Dr. Botkine stood up manfully for his patients, but his requests were generally ignored. It was prison regime, but that of a prison where there were many gaolers, each one of whom gave his own rendering of the rules set up by their drunken Kommissar. While Tchemodouroff was still in the Ipatieff house two of the servants, Nagorny and the footman Sednev, were taken away. They had not been able to watch with equanimity the Kommissar's rude treatment of the Cesarevitch. Their faces betrayed their feelings and they paid for this with their lives.

At the last only the footman Troup, a maid, and the cook were allowed to remain with the prisoners, besides the doctor. The cook was cook in name only, as the food was brought by the soldiers as and when it pleased the Kommissar.

It was hard to keep any illusions after hearing Tchemodouroff's poignant recital, but though the faces I had seen at Ekaterinburg had inspired me with the direst forebodings, still I tried to cling to the hope that it was impossible that anyone could have been so brutal as to murder in cold blood a sick woman, young girls, and an ailing boy.

Countess Hendrikoff and Mademoiselle Schneider had, it appeared, been dragged away in the Bolsheviks' wake to Perm. A little later we heard that Prince Dolgoroukoff and General Tatistcheff had been shot at the beginning of July, and shortly afterwards came the news of the murder of the Grand Dukes and of the saintly Grand Duchess Serge, the Empress's sister—the head of a religious community—at

Alopaievsk, near Ekaterinburg, on July 18. This was one of the last crimes of the Bolsheviks before their retreat.

The servants all left for Tobolsk, where many of their families lived, but Gilliard, Mademoiselle Tegleva, and I resolved to stay on at Tyumen, where we knew some people and where we might more easily hear news than in another town, strange to us. We were no longer beyond the pale and so were able to get work. Gilliard, naturally, gave French lessons. I taught English and so did Miss Mather, whom I had fetched back from Tobolsk as soon as communication was re-established. Notwithstanding the change of regime, life was still difficult. Everything had been so much upset that it took some time for normal conditions to become re-established. Though all kinds of wares began to appear on the market, things were still very expensive and imported goods came only in small quantities, as the Trans-Siberian was still partly in the Bolsheviks' hands higher up the line. Regular communication with Vladivostock was resumed only in November. We were now able to afford an extra room, to which my two companions moved, while Miss Mather shared mine. We could now also indulge in the luxury of domestic help to scrub the floors and cook us a decent meal. I suppose we became the fashion, for pupils poured in, and Gilliard and I spent the best part of each day in teaching children and grown-up people. English was greatly in request, as it is the commercial language both of Japan and China, with which countries Siberia has much trade. Our pupils brought us into contact with several very kindly and intellectual families, some of them local people, and others who had come from Russia during the famine exodus of 1918. One now saw decently dressed people walking in the streets again, as there was no longer danger of appearing

undemocratic if one was not ragged. Even dressmakers opened their doors, and the feminine element became fashionable if perhaps in fashions a little behind the times. All the shops opened in turn, and trains were run towards Omsk. When the first postman walked down the street it was such an event that he was followed by a retinue of small boys. Everyone seemed to breathe freely again now that the atmosphere of perpetual oppression and fear had gone.

The new Government had the best of chances, for at first the spirit of criticism, that bane of us Russians, seemed dormant. Its measures met with approval at the outset. Unfortunately, for various reasons, many political mistakes were made as time went on, and the Siberian Government was permanently hampered by not having a homogeneous army strong enough to defend it, and by being unable to supply its army with munitions in sufficient quantities. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, had the whole of Russia's munition factories at their back. Very soon after the White Army's arrival we saw new recruits being drilled in the streets. Both they and their officers were mere boys. The Government, a little nervous at proclaiming an immediate mobilisation during harvest time, had at first called only for volunteers. The enthusiasm was so strong in all classes that a large number of young men flocked to the recruiting offices. The contingent thus raised was not sufficient and some weeks later older classes were mobilised by conscription. This passed off quietly and without the protest that had been feared from these war-weary men.

Only people who have seen the state in which Siberia then was can realise how difficult was the task of those who had to build up an army powerful enough to re-conquer not only the Ural but the whole of Russia, for this was the ultimate hope of the White

commanders. To inculcate discipline into men who had become used to living in a state of chaos ; to train them sufficiently to make real soldiers of them ; lastly, to provide them with firearms and warm clothes (there were no cloth mills in Siberia) for a winter campaign, was not an easy undertaking. Only those who have witnessed that gigantic labour and know the many difficulties to be coped with, can render due justice to the men who tried to upbuild bit by bit both the army and the Government. If they failed it is only fair to say that they tried to the utmost, and that the odds against them were enormous. The sergeants drilling the recruits were old soldiers who had joined up. Many of these were to prove a great danger to the young army, for no one ever could know exactly what these men's antecedents had *really* been. They all pretended to have abominated the Bolsheviks, but very often they had really been Red guardsmen or, at the best, opportunists who changed about from one side to another according to which seemed most profitable. Many of them were simply Bolshevik spies. During the Bolshevik rule I was once able to judge the mentality of these men for myself. I accidentally met a soldier of the Tobolsk guard who had not belonged to the Bolshevik party when I knew him. He talked to me in a friendly manner—we were both strangers in the place—and in the course of conversation he informed me that he had joined a Bolshevik detachment which was being sent to recapture Tobolsk. " It was absolutely necessary for me to join up," he said, " for when I left Tobolsk my box remained there and my samovar too ! Such a good one it was—real nickel ! It could contain a pail of water ! I couldn't go back to fetch it as I could not cross the fighting line between Tobolsk and Tyumen, so I was obliged to join the Bolsheviks to get my belongings back." His valour was not rewarded, for

his unit never reached Tobolsk. I have reason to believe that he subsequently joined the White Army, assuring them that he had never been near the Bolsheviks—and had then resumed possession of his samovar! There were many such cases at that time.

All kinds of people belonging to different political parties now passed through Tyumen, some of whom had lain in hiding for several months. A few days after the taking of the town I witnessed the triumphal reception by the Town Council of Mrs. Brechko-Brechkovskaia, "the Grandmother of the Revolution," a corpulent, red-faced old lady who wore a white handkerchief, peasant fashion, over her head. She left by the Omsk steamer and smilingly acknowledged bunches of flowers and listened to welcoming speeches. It seemed to me rather incongruous that a woman who had spent the best part of her life in prison for having taken an active part in the revolutionary movement should have been so much hunted by the Bolsheviks that she had had to hide for safety in all kinds of remote places.

In September I met Prince Lvoff, the first President of the Provisional Government of 1917. After his release from prison in Ekaterinburg he had remained in hiding in the neighbourhood, fearing to be arrested again. It was Prince Lvoff who confirmed the news of the Emperor's murder. "That it should have come to this!" he said, with tears in his eyes. "It is terrible, unbelievable. Who would have thought that the revolution would have ended like this?" I was unnerved and could not help saying what I thought. "And who should be blamed?" I cried. "Not those ignorant fanatics, civil offenders most of them, who were the Emperor's gaolers. How could people like you, for instance, you who profess to be a monarchist, who, as President of the Moscow Semstvo for many years, ought to have known what was going

on in the country—how could you, after the March revolution, knowing the ever-increasing danger, not have taken immediate steps for the safety of the Emperor and his family? You were in power then. You bear a great share of the responsibility for all this."

"You are hard," he murmured, "but you are upset, I understand. It is terrible," he repeated, "terrible." I never saw him again, but it was Prince Lvoff who later sent me a Perm newspaper in which was a list of hostages who had been executed. In this I read the names of poor Nastinka Hendrikoff and Mademoiselle Schneider. These two perfectly harmless women were shot without any trial whatever —Mademoiselle Schneider was sixty-five! About the Empress and her children Lvoff knew nothing, but shook his head ominously when speaking of their possible fate. In this newspaper I found, besides the names of Hendrikoff and Schneider, the name of Alexei Wolkoff, the Empress's old page (servant), in the list of those who had been executed. The names of the other victims were unknown to us.

We thought sadly of poor Wolkoff, who had been with the Empress for so many years and who had proved himself both faithful and courageous during the long months in Tobolsk. At Ekaterinburg he had not been admitted to the Ipatieff house and had instead been taken to prison.

One day, several weeks after my conversation with Lvoff, my hostess knocked at my door and told me that an old beggar wanted to see me. I went out into the half-dark hall, and literally felt my knees giving way as, in the dim light, I saw distinctly outlined against the wall the figure of Wolkoff, pale and thin, with a long, flowing white beard, silently gazing at me. I pressed my hands to my forehead. Was it a ghost or was I losing my senses? I suppose I must have

recoiled and that my face showed my feelings, for as I leant back against the wall, unable to move a step, I heard a voice—unmistakably Wolkoff's—saying "Good heavens, Baroness, but it is I, Wolkoff! Do you not know me again?"

"But, Wolkoff, how *did* you escape?" I said. "Is it all a lie? I myself read your name among those executed on August 22. Is it possible that the Countess and Mademoiselle Schneider are alive?"

He crossed himself. "They have bidden you live long," he said (the old Russian formula for announcing a death). "I have escaped. . . ."

He then told me a story that was almost incredible. When the batch of prisoners were all ordered to leave their cells and follow the guard he had anticipated danger, not believing that they were only to be transferred to another prison as the poor victims were told. When the prisoners reached the outskirts of a little wood lying near the suburbs of Perm, the soldiers ordered them to stop. Wolkoff availed himself of that moment to bolt. He ran across a field toward the woods; shots were fired at him, but missed him. Turning his head, he saw the other prisoners, among them my colleagues, being shot down. He ran on. The guards tried to pursue him, but they were not numerous and were probably busy dividing the small belongings of their victims among themselves. By crouching behind bushes and hiding in the thickets Wolkoff managed to evade the soldiers. He had neither money nor maps. His goal was Tobolsk, where his wife was, and which he vaguely knew to be north of Perm. He walked for weeks, begging for his daily bread, sleeping in the open, losing his direction and being put right by the people he met when these appeared friendly. No wonder the spruce and dapper, clean-shaven, pink-cheeked man, whose sixty odd years had rested lightly on his shoulders,

was now a gaunt and pale shadow, his long white beard contributing not a little to his changed appearance. He still wore his blue frock-coat, but that was all that remained to him of the palace servant. His boots were torn, and he had neither hat nor coat. All his worldly possessions were gone. He had, of course, not a penny. We welcomed him warmly, made arrangements for him to hire a conveyance to take him to Tobolsk, and gave him winter clothing for the journey. His escape was quite miraculous.

Of course our thoughts turned to the other victims, but neither of the ladies, if they had followed Wolkoff's example and tried to run away, could have withstood the hardships he met with in his wanderings. He spoke of the ladies with tears in his eyes : of their fortitude, of Countess Hendrikoff's noble reply to the Bolsheviks when they asked her what she would do if she were set free—" Serve my Empress till my dying day." It rent our hearts to think that none of us had been able to do anything to help them. We were so thoroughly cut off from our colleagues that we did not even know that they were dragged from one prison to another. Till the last we had hoped we should join them some day. . . . Now the tutors and myself were the only survivors of the Household at Tobolsk.

CHAPTER XII

THE AMERICAN HOSPITAL

THE Bolsheviks had left to Siberia a terrible legacy in the epidemics that were spreading everywhere. Cholera that had been rife in summer had claimed many victims at Omsk, though happily fewer at Tyumen. Towards autumn, when the cholera died down, another scourge, spotted typhus, took its place. The refugees, the German prisoners of war who had been transferred to Siberia from Turkestan on account of the famine in that province, and the soldiers returning from the front had all brought the infection. Lack of disinfectants and of soap, the overcrowding of houses, and the scarcity of material which made people refuse to discard their contaminated clothing, were the chief reasons for the rapid spread of disease and made the fight against it extremely difficult. Neither the hospitals nor their staffs were numerous enough to cope with such an outbreak. They were, besides, overcrowded, for the Bolsheviks had left many of their men in them, and wounded belonging to the White Army continued to pour in as the advance on the Ural progressed. Miss Mather fell a victim to these epidemics and developed virulent enteric. Our landlady kindly allowed us to stay in the house, for it was hopeless to try to gain admittance to any of the hospitals, except to the emergency cholera barracks in which I did not like to risk her. I managed to find a good doctor, and in the last days of Miss Mather's

illness a nurse from one of the hospitals volunteered to come and help me with the night nursing. I was deeply grateful to her, for before this I had done all the nursing as well as the housework alone for fear of spreading the infection. It was extremely difficult to get the things necessary for the patient. One of the medicines the doctor had prescribed, some kind of oil emulsion, could nowhere be got, so the chemist told me. Seeing my disappointment, he added that a few days previously he had supplied some people with the last bottle of the stuff he had had. As the child for whom it was ordered had died, the parents might still have some of the medicine. I went to the address he gave me, and the people sold me the still half-full bottle, glad to get back part of the exorbitant price they had paid for it. For a disinfectant I exchanged a lace-trimmed nightdress! Unfortunately, all the hardships and anxieties she had undergone had sapped Miss Mather's constitution. No treatment proved of any avail, and early in October she died. Her loss was a cruel blow to me. Her funeral was unutterably sad: a small knot of strangers at the grave, a priest of another faith to give a last blessing to the coffin as it was lowered into the snow-covered ground—it was a picture of utter loneliness and desolation.

On the day after my faithful friend was laid to rest I resumed my lessons. Only hard work enabled me to bear the silence of that empty room where the shadow of death had lingered so recently.

Soon after this sad event a large detachment of the American Red Cross arrived, and promptly proceeded to fit up the Kolokolnikoffs' commercial school as a hospital. They came from the missionary hospitals in China and were headed by Dr. Lewis, the able head surgeon of the American hospital at Peking. The matron was Miss Florence Farmer, and the staff consisted of six doctors and eleven other nurses.

I had only heard of American methods before and had never seen them. I could not believe my eyes when I saw the rapidity with which these people made the slow Siberian workmen move. In an incredibly short time the large school building was turned into a model hospital. Partitions were built; water was laid on in all the prospective wards; electric light was installed lavishly. All the fittings were of the very best; an X-ray cabinet was put up and the operating theatre was supplied with the newest appliances. I was a judge of this, for I had passed some months of training at the Empress's hospital at Tsarskoe Selo and knew what a well-stocked hospital should look like. The large rooms, well heated, with plenty of light, made ideal wards, and the beds, bedding, etc., were so perfect and abundant that it was considered the most wonderful luck to be billeted in the American hospital. It was destined for the use of Czech units, but also admitted wounded soldiers of the White Army and in that way relieved the town hospitals, in which the number of typhus patients was daily alarmingly increasing.

At the end of November came the overthrow of the Omsk "Directorate," and Admiral Kolchak put himself at the head of a new Siberian Government. The change passed quite unnoticed in our town. At Omsk there had been a spell of unrest for a few days, but the Cossacks kept order and the Kolchak era began. Though this government was not officially recognised, the Allies supported it *de facto* if not *de jure*, and for that purpose some Allied units were sent down the line from Vladivostock, for by this time the whole Trans-Siberian line was clear.

The sick of the Allied forces were also sent to the American hospital. I offered my services as interpreter there and went as often as I could between my lessons, generally staying to dine with the staff. I had

great difficulty in hiding *how* much I enjoyed those meals. It was so long since I had sat at a civilised dinner-table on which there were actually four-pronged forks in use! There was excellent *real* meat, not tinned or miserable shreds pretending to be nourishing; hot vegetables—things I had forgotten the taste of, for except cabbage the market produced nothing—and the meal actually wound up with coffee! I felt I was a kind of Santa Claus when Miss Farmer sometimes gave me biscuits or chocolate to take home to the others. Our evening meal on those days seemed to us an echo of former palace life!

It was equally refreshing to see and talk to people who came from other countries, whose mentality had not been affected by any awful experiences, who had led normal lives and had kept normal interests, and they were most discreet in never touching on the past in talking to us Russians. There were American and European papers in the hospital reading-room. A piano had been unearthed, and as I walked down the long corridor which ran through the whole building I often heard some very good playing in the distance. Several of the patients were fine musicians, for the Czech soldiers had been mostly volunteers, and many were educated men. There was a great camaraderie between the Czech privates and their officers. There was scarcely anything in their dress to distinguish the one from the other, and often they were on the same educational level, as there were university men and former school teachers among the soldiers too. The nurses flitted about in the neat pale blue dresses and pretty white caps that I thought so much more attractive than our nursing uniform. These nurses were wonderfully good at their work and were most untiring in their ministrations to the wants of their patients. It was sometimes a difficult matter for them to understand each other, as the nurses spoke only English, of

which the majority of the men did not understand a word. The matron, Miss Farmer, could talk Russian, as she had been at the head of a Red Cross unit with the Russian armies in Galicia, where her work had been much appreciated. She was a born organiser, young, active, and absolutely indefatigable. She seemed to be in every ward of the vast hospital at the same time, always cheerful and ready for any emergency, and issuing orders right and left.

Most of the Czech patients knew some Russian, but, though the ambulance men were mainly Austrian or German prisoners from the camps, German was not allowed to be spoken in the hospital, broken Russian being the usual means of intercourse.

This gave rise to many difficulties. I was in a quandary once, not knowing to what language I should have to resort in order to make myself understood. A French soldier who lay in one of the wards asked me to tell the ambulance man to bring him something he needed, for nobody could understand French. This particular ambulance man was a new arrival whom I had not seen before, and when I addressed him in Russian he gave me a blank look. I hesitatingly tried on him the few words of Czech I knew. The Czech language resembles Russian, but sometimes, I had learnt to my cost, the words had a totally different meaning. The man's face showed absolute lack of comprehension. I hesitated to continue in Czech, for fear of being totally misunderstood, and in my confusion my brain involuntarily produced the language I knew the least of all those I spoke. "Hvad hed——" (what do you call——), I began in Danish. The likeness to a familiar sound brought a cheerful smile to the man's face. "Zu befehl" (at your orders), he said in German. He happened to be a German prisoner of war who had drifted into the hospital, so I explained to him what I wanted in his

own tongue. The Czechs, I believe, also resorted to German when both parties got stranded in Russian, for, of course, all the Austrian prisoners, as well as the Czechs, had formerly used German as their official language.

It was rather touching to see the way in which one of the German ambulance men, a tall, bearded fellow, looked after a French soldier who was dangerously ill with typhoid fever. (The Frenchman belonged to one of the Allied units that had been sent to support the Czechs.) The German lifted the Frenchman like a baby in his strong arms, and watched over him for hours, pouring spoonfuls of liquid into the mouth of his patient whenever the half-conscious man could be aroused from his torpor. The nurses said that his former enemy practically saved the Frenchman's life.

In the same ward lay another French soldier, a pale, fair man from the Northern Provinces. He also could only talk French, and seemed to enjoy my visits, as I was the one person who could speak his language to him. " Ah, Madame, it cheers me up only to hear French again," he used to say.

In the cot beside him lay poor " Jaunet " (the little yellow one) as they affectionately called him, an unfortunate little Tonkinese soldier whose sad eyes reminded one of a friendly dog. Towards evening those eyes were often bright with fever, for " Jaunet " was slowly dying of pneumonia. A racking cough shook his wasted frame, and his small yellow face got thinner and thinner. To this lonely being no one could talk, for he had not even French! The pale-faced Frenchman could sometimes make him understand a few simple things, but the Tonkinese usually lay silent, his eyes fixed in patient despair on some imaginary picture that he saw in his fevered fantasies. Tonkin is far from Siberia, and the poor fellow, used to his tropical climate, shivered even in

the warm hospital rooms, heated to true American temperature. The nurses always gave him a double supply of blankets and he wore several layers of jackets. No amount of nursing could save him. I believe " Jaunet " never saw his native Tonkin again, but was buried in snow-covered Siberia.

The American hospital was of great assistance to the population. The matron, Miss Farmer, took the greatest interest in a settlement for delicate Russian children that had just been opened, and it was generously supplied from the hospital stores. Dr. Lewis often sent medicines and disinfectants to the local hospitals, where the supplies were running out. One of the American doctors, an oculist, proved a boon to the town, as he had all the newest instruments, which the local specialist lacked.

The hospital staff impressed me by their simple and kindly manner. They seemed so sincere in their desire to help their neighbour wherever they found him, and it was all done so quietly and without any *réclame*. All the hospital grieved when one of the nurses fell ill with typhus and died after a few days' illness. There were no typhus patients in the hospital, as infectious cases were not admitted, but it is probable that the ambulance men brought the infection from the town in their clothes. Poor Miss McBride worked gallantly as long as she could. She took to her bed, with what was at first believed to be pneumonia, only when her strength completely failed. All hearts went out in a parting homage to this noble woman who met her death in working for those ideals of charity and self-sacrifice to which she had devoted her life.

At Christmas the staff gave the patients and themselves a real treat. Gaily decorated Christmas trees were put in the wards, in which the patients hung up all the Allied flags which they had themselves made with great ingenuity. A real Anglo-American

Christmas dinner was produced by the Chinese cook. He surpassed himself on this occasion, though he was always an artist. He and the boys under him gave a quaint touch to the hospital when they noiselessly flitted about the kitchens in their felt shoes, their neat blue clothes being the perfection of Chinese elegance. They added to the heterogeneous jumble of the hospital's population, and with them no one but the American staff, who all spoke Chinese fluently, having learnt it at their Missions, could communicate. Still, the chef managed somehow to do his own marketing. I often met him coming back from town drawing a little sleigh filled with his purchases, with a curious and admiring crowd of women and children around him, of whose presence he seemed loftily unconscious.

After Christmas I made up my mind to leave Siberia. I realised that there I had no chance of learning if the Empress and her children were still alive, or if the reports of their death had any foundation. I hoped somehow to reach England, and thence to try to join the Empress-Mother in the Crimea. The plan seemed impracticable at first, on account of the difficulties of the journey. Although trains in which passengers could travel were now running, a journey in a cattle-truck in winter would be no joke. I resolved to don a nurse's dress and to volunteer to join the American Red Cross unit that was taking consumptive Czechs by sea to Europe, offering my services in pay for my transport. In view of this, I went up to Omsk in the beginning of January 1919. Some of the Czech soldiers from the hospital were going up in a special car and offered to take me with them. Monsieur Gilliard accompanied me, as he wanted to see some friends in the French Military Mission at Omsk.

CHAPTER XIII

OMSK

AGAIN the train! How I blessed the Czechs for the offer of a seat when I saw the hundreds of people storming the cattle-trucks at the station! The whole of Siberia still seemed to be travelling, and the carriages presented the same picture I had seen in Kerensky and Bolshevik times. The Czechs' car was an exception to the rest, for besides the six or seven soldiers there were in it only Mr. S. of the American Y.M.C.A., Gilliard and myself. Half of the car was a primitive saloon carriage which was put at the disposal of myself and my two travelling companions, while the Czechs used the other half, where they sat round a large iron stove. They were all fine men, wearing the new grey uniform of their army, with grey sheepskin Hussar busbies adorned with red cloth and tassels on their heads. They were very friendly to us, and talked on all manner of subjects in fairly good Russian. All of them seemed to be keen politicians, very democratic in their views, and they volubly discussed the political questions of the moment, both Russian and European, with the wonderful knowledge of the subject I had already remarked among the men in our hospital. They spoke with most ardent admiration of Masarik and other prominent leaders, whom most of them had seen and known.

It took us more than two days to reach Omsk.

Soon after we had started, our soldier companions brewed coffee in a pan and produced all kinds of food from their knapsacks. This went on without interruption all the time. They pressed us warmly to take part in their meals, and carefully wiped all the bread and sausages with their handkerchiefs, which had been kept in their boots, before passing them to me! They were very considerate to the one woman among them, and, though they exchanged jests, they stopped one another when some forcible words slipped out inadvertently, and all of them went out of their way to make us as comfortable as they could. It was with real gratitude that we thanked them when we parted.

On arrival at Omsk we met with a cold reception in every sense. The lack of forests around it causes Omsk to be one of the coldest towns in Siberia. We felt this driving along the endlessly long Atamanskaia, the chief street, in which are most of the Government buildings and the best shops. Though I was well wrapped up and my face was covered with a thick layer of cold cream to avoid frost-bite, I was chilled to the bone and scarcely able to breathe in the thin air. The thermometer registered the lowest temperature I have ever known—roughly, about 62° F. below zero (−42° R.). We drove to an hotel, but the people laughed in our faces when we asked for rooms. Every hotel in town had been full up for months.

Where were we to go? I knew no one in Omsk and had no idea of the address of the American Red Cross. Gilliard betook himself to the French Military Mission, while I fortunately remembered the address of relations of some of my friends, and went to them to inquire if they knew of some possible lodging. Mr. X had a prominent post in the administration, but I found him and his wife, with three babies, a nurse, and a homeless nephew of eighteen living

in two rooms. They told me that no boarding-houses existed, and that it was impossible to rent a room anywhere, but said they would manage to have me put up somehow and, though they had never seen me before, insisted that I must come and have my meals with them. Mr. X immediately went on his quest and returned with the news that a man who had an office in the house they lived in suggested that I should sleep in this, as it was empty at night. He proposed that I should use his writing-table instead of a bed, and only stipulated that I should leave the premises before 9 A.M. The X family strongly urged me to agree to this arrangement, as it was useless to hope to find any better shelter. I had to accept, though I felt that an eighth person in the X's two rooms during the day might be decidedly too much! The X's themselves did not seem to mind. I discovered that numerous visitors came to see them in the afternoon. The guests occupied every chair and even the window-sills, but this never seemed to disturb anyone. I was not to use the writing-table, however, for the homeless nephew generously lent me his bed, which was discreetly disguised in a corner of the office. I believe the youth slept on the floor somewhere in the house.

My new acquaintances proved to be charming people. The young wife was a delightful companion, and never seemed to object to doing her cooking, washing and mending in the one room that did duty as kitchen and parlour, while the three small babies crawled about the floor and visitors dropped in for a chat and a cup of tea at any hour of the day. Most interesting people came in to see them, and from these I learned all that had happened in Russia and Europe during the months that I had been cut off from news. They also told me that many people whom I had known in Russia had drifted to Omsk; but I was not

in the mood to go about and see many people besides those I had to.

One of the first foreigners I met at Omsk was Sir Charles Eliot, the head of the British Diplomatic Mission. I could not believe my eyes when a wire from him was brought to me at Tyumen, just before I left, in which he asked if he could do anything for me. For nearly two years I had not seen a telegram form! An unsigned postcard I had written to my friend Kathleen Conyngham Greene, daughter of the British Ambassador at Tokio, asking her to let my father know that I was still alive, had reached her. The Greenes had immediately wired to Sir Charles to try to find me, and this telegram was the result.

It was strange and unreal to return to a world where people gave dinner-parties, discussed small social events, and worried over minor daily happenings. Everything in ordinary life seemed so unimportant to me, and it was not easy to readjust myself to everyday things. It was with difficulty that I persuaded Sir Charles not to pay me a ceremonious call, for I really could not receive him in the office, nor in the only room of my friends.

I felt absolutely lost when I was asked to dine with General Janin or Sir Alfred Knox, the heads of the French and British Military Missions at that time at Omsk. The members of General Knox's staff, Captain V. A. Cazalet and the Russian Colonel Rodzianko, often came to see me at my office when its lawful owner had "shut up." It was so bitterly cold in my apartment—there was only a tiny stove which was not heated after closing hours—that my guests had to keep on their fur coats during their visit. Cazalet generally came loaded with sweets and cakes, which I shared with the X babies. Poor little "post-revolution" mites! they had never seen cakes before, for even at Omsk such things were a great

luxury, a tiny *2d.* cake costing about *3s.* General Janin I had known at the G.H.Q. at Mohileff when during the war I accompanied the Empress on her visits to the Emperor. The General had changed very much, I thought. I connected this mentally with a black band I saw round his sleeve. He had aged, and his eyes had lost their keenness. He spoke to me with great feeling and respect of the Emperor, whom he had known well.

Omsk was overflowing with people. In the times of the Monarchy it had numbered about 60,000 inhabitants; now, since the Siberian Government had had its seat there, there were upwards of 200,000. All the thousands of refugees from Russia had collected at Omsk, and the housing problem had, in consequence, become acute. Exorbitant rents were asked for the tiniest rooms, and I discovered on going to see friends that many of the families of the Government officials spent the nights in the buildings, as I did in my office. In one of the ministries I found a large gathering of old ladies and small children, camping among the desks and stools of the big and cheerless rooms. Out of secret hiding-places bundles of bedding for the babies were produced, while in the next room a party of clerks and their families were drinking tea.

During the day many of these miserable women had to walk about the streets, and when the cold was too intense they took refuge in the houses of their luckier friends who, like my hostess, still had rooms of their own. This explained to me the prolonged calls that people paid each other, generally accompanied by all their youthful progeny.

Among the people I was surprised to find at Omsk was an old friend of our family who had been carried by the general exodus far away from her usual moorings. Though nearing eighty she was still vigorous, both physically and mentally, and had that

wonderful versatility seen in so many of my country-women which enabled them to bear the difficulties and trials of their refugee life without breaking down, and which often makes the woman the breadwinner of a whole family.

This old lady had had many sorrows, had just lost an only and idolised daughter, was penniless and practically homeless. Still, she was able to make the best of things, and it was wonderful to see the way in which she managed to attract people and to hold quite a little court, seating herself on a packing-case turned upside down, in front of a ramshackle table in the cold and cheerless offices which were her present quarters. She hospitably dispensed weak tea with lemon. Her financial difficulties did not allow her to offer anything with it, but it was her personality and not the fare which drew numerous visitors to her room. They took turns in going to replenish the small samovar, keeping up an animated conversation all the time.

The whole party belonged to the same part of Russia, the Volga region. They had left the town of X, which had been till then in the hands of the Czechs, when it suddenly became known one evening that owing to the approach of vastly superior Bolshevik armies the Czechs had decided to abandon X without a battle. The Bolsheviks were expected to enter the town on the morrow. When the news got about, most of the intelligentsia resolved, then and there, to follow in the wake of the Czechs, as they had had previous experience of the Bolsheviks' rule and were afraid of reprisals on their return. Acquaintances warned each other of the general departure. A relation of mine was thus wakened in the night by some friends and had less than an hour in which to collect her belongings to be in time to join the rest. People had to take with them only the barest necessities, the things they could carry themselves, for they

had to look forward to a long tramp of some thirty-five miles till they reached the town of Z, on one of the great rivers, where several large passenger steamers were in readiness. There lay salvation, for on these boats Siberia could be reached.

All the fugitives had with them only the money they happened to have in the house when they left X. No one could wait till the morrow when the banks would be open, for the Bolsheviks might be on them at any moment. In their hurry and panic the majority took the most useless things with them, and left those they were to need most. A young friend of mine, for instance, dragged her baby's heavy copper warming-pan for a long time, being under the illusion that she was carrying her most valuable pieces of plate. Another left a beautiful bracelet on her dressing-table, the sale of which would have provided for the wants of the family for some time, taking instead a parcel containing the children's old goloshes. Very few people were able to get a conveyance when they started on their flight. After the revolution people were so impoverished that it was the greatest exception for anyone still to have a carriage and horses. The stream of thousands of fugitives, all trudging along as fast as they could on the highroad on that dark autumn night, must have been reminiscent of Israel's flight from Egypt. Fortunately, it was neither cold nor raining. More than a mile of the highroad was occupied by the compact stream of hurrying humanity. Some stumbled, others jostled each other, the heavy and bulky parcels the majority carried getting entangled with those of their neighbours. In the darkness voices called to each other. "Are you here, Masha?" "Alexander Alexandrovitch, have you found your daughter?" "Petrousha, where is the child?"

As daybreak neared individual faces could be

distinguished, and relations found each other in the crowd. Many desperate lamentations were heard when it was discovered that some member of the family had been left behind. It meant a real tragedy. There was small hope of seeing the missing one for years, there was no postal communication between the two sides in the civil war, and people whose relations had fled were exposed to the greatest danger at the Bolsheviks' hands.

Wedged in among the crowd of pedestrians were ambulances and also some ordinary peasants' carts, in which the wounded soldiers who had fought on the Czechs' side were being evacuated. The doctors and nurses walked along beside their patients, trying to cheer them up and to settle the inert bodies more comfortably on the cushions that were quite insufficient to alleviate the suffering caused by the jolts. The men groaned aloud, for, alas ! no careful driving can avoid the ruts on our national roads. The slightly wounded, with bandaged heads and arms, also shared the general plight, and walked most of the distance, sometimes arm-in-arm with an ambulance man, and from time to time perched on the edge of a cart, with the soldier's usual insouciance, exchanging jokes and cigarettes with its inmates. In other carts, farther on, travelled the whole of the girls' school, the "Internat de l'Institut des Demoiselles," headmistress, teachers, and pupils. These were surrounded by numerous women and children, and the small fry got a lift from time to time from the girls. The haunting fear of the women's nationalisation laws had prompted the headmistress to take the young girls in her charge out of harm's way.

My old friend had walked valiantly all the time, and seemed to have been rather hurt when one of the wounded soldiers, addressing her as "Grandmother," insisted on her sitting on the edge of his cart. She

shared this seat in turns with the young wife of an officer, who had a three days' old baby, but who also walked a great part of the way. It was incomprehensible how they all managed it, and in what a short time they covered the distance. Fear lent wings to everyone's feet and the nervous tension gave strength to the weakest, for all knew that if the Bolsheviks took X before they themselves reached Z they would be sure to be overtaken, for the Bolsheviks had cars to which thirty-five miles was no distance.

As the fugitives advanced many had gradually to unload the bundles they carried, as they could not stand their weight any more. With many heart-burnings they had to throw away on the roadside things that were to them the last mementoes of their abandoned homes. It was seldom that they could find purchasers for their belongings as they hurried through the villages on the way, and when they did find someone they were generally offered a ludicrous price.

But they did it! When they reached Z the feet of the majority were blistered, their boots were torn, children were weeping, and they and their mothers could scarcely drag themselves a yard further. But when they finally embarked on the steamers nothing mattered any more. They felt they had escaped. How many incurable illnesses were brought on by that night's forced march, how many women had ruined their health permanently by it, no one could say, but they were on their way to freedom and away from the reign of oppression.

Though the conditions of life they found in Siberia were certainly not easy, I never heard these people express regret at their move. It was clearly out of the question to find suitable intellectual labour for so many hundreds of newcomers. Some of them succeeded in this by going far away into the depths of the

country, but many a delicate woman had to do hard physical work—had indeed to do anything that she was offered in order to keep the wolf from the door. Several ladies I knew earned their living by stacking firewood for the engines at the stations. (All Siberian railways use wood instead of coal.)

In less congested towns than Omsk the refugees' life was easier, as the demand for intellectual labour was greater and the cost of living cheaper. The conditions, however, were much more primitive. I thought my Omsk friends, the X's, fortunate—for their two rooms at least had some furniture in them and were in a house which had civilised comforts—when I went to see some other old friends in a town farther up the line. These poor people, a consumptive old man who could not work and his wife and daughter, had but one room between them, the furniture of which consisted of one table and a bench, while on the floor lay three large potato sacks, filled with hay, which did duty for beds. I thought of the splendid country place they had owned, and of their former life. And still both mother and daughter worked hard, though their earnings only just sufficed to pay for their food!

I also met an old acquaintance at Omsk in the person of Elsa Brandström, the daughter of the Swedish Minister at Petrograd. It brought back old days to see her tall, slim figure, now in Swedish nurse's dress, and to be welcomed by her genial smile. She had done wonderful work for the German prisoners of war, acting as a representative of the Swedish Red Cross. Miss Brandström had gone from camp to camp, all over Siberia, for long months in the worst possible conditions, often witnessing heartrending scenes. She nearly died from an attack of typhus, but returned to her self-allotted task on her recovery. "A fine woman," all the Englishmen said, giving her their

nation's fair appreciation, even though she had helped their enemy. Elsa remained in Siberia to wind up her work. When we parted I saw in her eyes for the first time a flicker of sadness. She thought of her old father in Sweden. When peace was about to be signed it was hard to remain away from him. It was but a momentary weakness. She smiled bravely again, thinking perhaps of all the men who had to wait their turn for repatriation and to whom her staying meant so much. I admired her greatly.

CHAPTER XIV

THE KOLCHAK GOVERNMENT

I DID not meet Admiral Kolchak, the Dictator, as he was ill and could not come to see me, and I feared that my going to visit him would be the cause of ill-natured comment. He had many enemies, and the Socialist element was continually accusing him of having Monarchist leanings. I had known him personally and remembered him well—upright of bearing, alert, thin and fair, looking much younger than his years, though he was a man still in the prime of life. He was a fine sailor, and as a young officer had already made a name for himself as an explorer, and it was considered in the navy that he had a brilliant career before him. He was greatly liked by his men, and his bravery had won their admiration. I was told that during the worst period of the revolution the sailors of the Black Sea Fleet arrested him and called upon him to give up his sword—he had a sword of honour for conspicuous bravery. Kolchak answered that "the Japanese had returned it to him when he was a prisoner of war, for they respected the reward of gallantry." He would give up his sword to no man alive, and threw it into the sea. The men grumbled but slunk away, and shortly afterwards they sent down divers and retrieved the sword, which they returned to him. It is a pretty story; I heard it from reliable sources, and I give it, for it paints the man.

Kolchak was clever and loved his country. As General Knox said of him : " He was a gallant sailor and gentleman, and a great patriot," and so he was considered by all who knew him. He was very inadequately assisted. The Allies' aid was lukewarm and half-hearted. His was never officially recognised as a government. Kolchak had behind him a country rich in natural produce, but with no industry and no factories. The munitions for his troops had to be sent by driblets from Vladivostock. The one railway line was in constant danger of falling into the hands of stray bands of Bolsheviks that lay in hiding in the woods and kept up a guerilla war with Kolchak's men. Kolchak was also greatly hampered at first by the rival Government set up at Chita by Ataman Semenoff, who obstructed him in many ways and even held up munition trains. This state of affairs lasted till the spring of 1919, when Semenoff recognised Kolchak's authority and was appointed by the latter Governor of the province he held.

Another difficulty of the Kolchak administration was the lack of real statesmen and experts. All the best political heads of Russia had fled from Bolshevism, either to the Crimea or to the Caucasus, and Kolchak had to make use of such men as he still found in Siberia, from which also there had been a great exodus abroad. These men proved unequal to their task. I was greatly struck by the want of proper organisation that was patent to me in all the Government offices I visited. They seemed to be run by amateurs—with the best intentions probably—but without the necessary preparations. What could one expect of a clerk in the Foreign Office who up till this time had been a village priest and suddenly became a diplomat? He was probably discreet, being accustomed to keep the secrets of confession, but was this preparation for diplomacy ? The higher officials were

in most cases former junior clerks, or more often rank outsiders who had everything to learn in the work.

Kolchak had thought it necessary to call into life most of the State institutions that had existed under the Monarchy. All the cumbrous administration, the ministries, the senate, and the law courts, existed officially at Omsk, but only a small percentage of their staffs had ever originally belonged to these institutions. As the archives were all at Petrograd and Moscow there was no possibility of referring to them. The work was slowly and, so it was said, not well done. This soon became a reason for justifiable criticism, and criticism of every kind was rife at Omsk. It was the more dangerous because all political parties had become used to the idea of Governments being easily overthrown, and that the men who did the overthrowing could step into the shoes of their predecessors. To the "Menscheviks" and Socialists Kolchak was not sufficiently democratic. On the other hand the Monarchists disapproved of every liberal measure.

Most of Kolchak's army was holding the Ural front. Winter had brought a cessation of hostilities, but he had only raw Russian recruits in the towns. The Allied contingents sent to support him were quartered in different towns and were supposed to keep order only, without taking part in active warfare. These Allied forces consisted of two British battalions, some Canadians, and French soldiers (who stayed at Vladivostock), and a small contingent of Serbs and Italians. The last were former prisoners of war, who came from provinces that had recently been Austrian. General Janin, as senior in rank, commanded the United Allied forces, and General Knox was Inspector-General. I heard from military men, however, that except for the British units, which did not number more than 1500 men, the rest were not a serious military force. The Czechs also no longer took part

in active service at the front, and were quartered in towns to prevent any outbreak of Bolshevism. They were weary of fighting, and had but one thought—to return to their homes and country, especially as Czecho-Slovakia had now become an independent state.

The Czechs also guarded the Trans-Siberian line. They did this efficiently, but it gave rise to much friction and many difficulties. The whole Russian railway administration had been placed under Czech control, and one often saw quite young Czech officers giving peremptory orders to old Russian engineers. The older men submitted most unwillingly to this tutelage, and the consequence was that dual orders were given with results that were most harmful to the general run of affairs. Though all intelligent people realised and appreciated the great service the Czech units had rendered to Siberia in freeing it from the Bolsheviks, there was at this time a good deal of bitter feeling against them. The bulk of the population was irritated by the Czechs. The best buildings everywhere had been put at their disposal. Their trains went first, their soldiers got better pay than the Russians. This was, of course, only natural, being due both to a feeling of gratitude and to international courtesy, but was exceedingly irritating to the masses. A more serious ground for misunderstanding was the desire of the Czechs to exercise a preponderating influence in military matters. Their very democratic views led them to support the Socialist parties, and thus added to the difficulties of the Government, which was trying to steer a middle course in troubled waters.

General Knox, who was going on a journey of inspection up the line, now offered to take me with him, urging me to give up the idea of going to Europe with the invalid transport. I accepted this suggestion

gratefully, but had in consequence to spend several weeks at Omsk awaiting his departure.

In attempting to replenish my wardrobe, which consisted of a single coat and skirt and a couple of ragged cotton frocks, I discovered that only war profiteers—and Siberia seemed to have plenty of these —could afford the luxury of buying clothes. There were numerous shops selling foodstuffs at more or less reasonable prices. But dress material could only be bought at the " Emporiums "—large stores that vanished as quickly as they sprang up—which sold everything one could think of, at appalling prices. Many goods were the result of a little judicious smuggling, others were symptomatic of the financial straits to which people had been reduced. In these shops one could see beside a pair of more or less new boots antique Chinese embroideries, old carved ivories, pieces of old silver of the most perfect workmanship, lovely bits of lace, the finest sables. Further on would be salt fish and tins of corned beef, the latter bearing such old labels that I shuddered to think of the fate of those who might be tempted by their contents. In the same shop second-hand clothing was sold, and the rapidity with which the most dreadful gowns and the most extraordinary suits that had ever covered a human body were sold was also significant. These were not cheap either, for the shopkeepers made huge profits. There was great poverty in all classes, especially among the families of officers and employees, who lived only on the men's pay. Mothers and daughters had often but one coat between them, and went out in it in turns. Children simply stayed at home. No one was rich enough to help his neighbour. Both the Russian and the American Red Cross tried to do what they could, but of course they were not equipped to meet such emergencies, as there were so many of the " new poor."

Owing to the presence of so many different elements there was a strange medley of Europe and Asia in Omsk. One could see bands of Canadians in their picturesque fur coats, polar helmets, and white fur moccasins, while further on one would meet a detachment of real British Tommies walking along with that special springy step that is so different from the heavy measured tread of the Russian soldier. The officer heading the detachment, cane in hand, might be a perfect specimen of the English youth, his very British type in sharp contrast to the features one saw around him. Motor-cars darted to and fro, their occupants sometimes Frenchmen in huge fur coats, but faithful to their red and grey *kepi*, sometimes Japanese, disdaining fur and in khaki trench coats. Peasants' sledges drove side by side with the homely *isvozchik*, recklessly dashing along at the imminent danger to life and limb of both the driver and his fare. These typical figures made one feel that one was still in Russia, and that the foreign soldiers who filled up so much of the picture were only part of the strange situation produced by these abnormal times.

A skating rink had been arranged on the river, where some of the Canadians could be seen every day showing their skill. The Siberians seldom, if ever, indulge in any kind of winter sport, partly on account of the rigorous climate, but chiefly because of their natural indolence. Their admiration of the prowess of the new arrivals was great in proportion, and they would stand for hours motionless in the deep snow, watching the Canadians gyrate in the intricate movements of a complicated valse or in some cunningly devised figure.

Many Russian officers could be again seen in the streets, some wearing Imperial uniforms, others in khaki coats of British cut. Here also would be peasant women in white leather fur-lined coats and

high felt boots, their heads well wrapped up in shawls ; or some small pupil of the cadet school would pass, trying not to look half frozen in the thin coat to which he clung to emphasise the fact that he belonged to one of the old schools of Russia.

Our nearness to China was apparent from the number of Chinese who might be seen leisurely walking in the streets: sometimes a dignified merchant in a fine sable hat that was the envy of every woman he met, sometimes a humble coolie selling his wares or carrying a large basket of washing. Numerous Chinese laundries had cropped up all over Siberia after the revolution. There had been one at Tyumen that I had patronised. Their work was very good and their charges extremely moderate. It was this that had tempted me originally to employ them, but I always went to their premises with a feeling of apprehension. They were probably God-fearing, or Buddha-fearing, men, but their faces did not inspire me with confidence when I stepped down into the dimly lighted cellar which was the laundry. The cellar looked uncanny ; it was plunged in a haze of steam that issued in clouds from huge vats in the corner and filled the whole air. Dim Chinese figures flitted about, some dressed in nondescript garments, some naked to the waist. Other Chinamen executed a kind of war-dance on the clothes in the vats—their system of laundry ! An old Chinaman, toothless and with an unpleasant scowl, would make out a bill in hieroglyphics, rapidly explaining the items to us in pidgin English. In the background was a kind of low bench on which crouched other figures, huddled together and smoking pipes, seemingly half asleep, but whenever one of them chanced to look up, in the glance he gave me I saw a mingling of hostility and nervousness. I was always glad to pay whatever was asked and depart as quickly as possible. Were

these merely "*washermen*," and if not, what were they?

From what I saw of it, life at Omsk must have been deadly dull for the foreigners stationed there. The British and Canadian units lived their own lives, apart from the rest. They varied the tedium of their days by mild forms of sport and by amateur concerts for the men. Russians, of course, could not entertain in the circumstances, and only exceptionally did some charity concert unite all the social elements.

General Knox started on his journey at the end of January, and this was the end of my life at Omsk. I bade farewell to Monsieur Gilliard, who had got a post in the French Military Mission, and was to remain at Omsk. Our whole party dispersed. Mademoiselle Tegleva was at Tyumen, Mr. Gibbes was then still at Ekaterinburg, but was later to join the British Military Mission at Omsk. Both the tutors had so heartily identified their interests with those of the Imperial Family that they had served so loyally and for whom they had done so much, that it had created a great link between us all. They all were to follow in my footsteps and return to Europe, but much later, after having seen the Kolchak *débâcle* and the return of Bolshevism to Siberia.

CHAPTER XV

ON BOARD THE BRITISH MILITARY TRAIN

THE train that the Government had put at the disposal of General Knox was one of the former Court trains. The very compartment in which I travelled was full of associations, for it had often been mine when I accompanied the Empress or her daughters on some of their shorter journeys (for longer ones they used their own luxurious private train). Though the carriages had been for some months the headquarters of a Bolshevik Commander-in-Chief, they had, wonderfully enough, not suffered much by his stay in it. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the gentleman in question had had to quit it somewhat precipitately on account of adverse circumstances. He had, wisely, taken away all the useful trifles on which he could lay hands, for clocks and thermometers, as well as every copper bolt and screw, were missing. It was said that he had been very loth to part with the armchairs in the saloon carriage, but had perforce to leave them as they could not be coaxed through the narrow doors and he had no time to lose.

After a whole year in Siberian houses the warm clean cars, the leather-covered seats, soft carpets, electric light, and actually all the usual civilised washing appliances seemed to me the height of luxury. I believed I was dreaming when for the first time I entered the brightly lit dining-car, which served as a

messroom for General Knox and his staff. The latter consisted mainly of young officers, many of whom had a fair knowledge of Russian and were interested in the country. There was also an old Canadian colonel, who was a frequent guest and who looked a little doubtfully at me at the beginning, but who afterwards became quite sociable.

I felt extremely shy at first in my unusual surroundings—one woman, and a foreigner into the bargain, in the mess of a military train, but the friendliness and sympathy shown by all the staff soon put me at my ease. Some fifteen to twenty people sat down daily at the little tables in the dining-car. I was usually placed at the General's table, the third seat at which was occupied in turn by one or other of the officers at the General's special invitation. The tables were occupied by khaki-clad figures, and the rest of the party stood up until the General had taken his seat. Through all their easy-going manner military decorum was maintained. Bliss, the General's orderly, acted as major-domo and directed white-coated waiters who moved about noiselessly. Everything was English: the menus, the service, even the labels on the pickle jars and jam pots. I quite forgot I was in Siberia. Here were tall men and short men, some fair, some dark, but all typically British and wearing the well-groomed look so peculiar to their nation which struck me as in such contrast to all the people with whom I had been in contact during recent months, where the outer man had been forgotten in the general struggle for existence. Directing the proceedings were the burly, good-natured Colonel Rodzianko, the Russian liaison officer, his great voice booming over the hubbub of conversation and his language sometimes "highly coloured"; and the real A.D.C., kind, cheerful Victor Cazalet, who always looked after everyone and saw to everything. Here were Captain

Steveni, slim and wiry, who talked Russian as well as I did; Major Cameron, who seemed always deep in serious business conversation with some man whom he could only waylay at meal-times; Commander Wolfe Murray, of H.M.S. *Kent*, then at Vladivostock, who had just received the St. George's Cross from Admiral Kolchak for conspicuous bravery, but who could not wear the Order, as Kolchak's Government had not been officially recognised by England. General Dietrichs, the commander-in-chief of Kolchak's forces, who also lived in a railway carriage at the station, came to dine several times while the train was still at Omsk, and so did some French and Czech officers. A stir was caused when, occasionally, the mess had a lady visitor. This was generally someone who had come on a business matter, and whom General Knox hospitably invited, knowing what a treat a good meal was to people even in these improved times.

General Dietrichs told me that the Cesarevitch's small spaniel, Joy, was with him at Omsk. The dog had been his small master's constant companion, and had been taken both to Tobolsk and to Ekaterinburg. At Tobolsk the Cesarevitch had often been highly amused at the dog's contempt of the Kommissars' orders, for whenever Joy espied me passing the house he would manage to slip through the gates and greet me boisterously. The poor little beast had been found by the Czechs when they took Ekaterinburg, wandering about half famished in the courtyard of the Ipatieff house. He seemed to be always looking for his master, and this had made him so sad and dejected that he would scarcely touch his food even when he was lovingly cared for. I went to see Joy, and he, evidently connecting me in his dog's brain with his masters, imagined that my coming announced theirs. Never did I see an animal in such ecstasy.

When I called him he made one bound out of the carriage and tore down the platform towards me, jumping in the air and running about me in wide circles, when he did not cling to me with his forepaws, walking upright like a circus dog. General Dietrichs said that he had never given such a welcome to anyone before, and I attributed this solely to the fact that my clothes, which were the same that I had worn at Tobolsk, had still kept a familiar smell, for I had never specially petted him. When I left, Joy lay for a whole day near the door through which I had gone. He refused his food and relapsed again into his usual despondency.

What had little Joy seen on that terrible night of July 16? He had been with the Imperial Family to the last. Had he witnessed the tragedy? His brain had evidently kept the memory of a great shock, and his heart was broken.

It was pathetic seeing this dumb friend, who brought back the memory of the Cesarevitch so vividly. Little Joy was well cared for. He was taken to England by Colonel Rodzianko and spent his last years in the utmost canine comfort, but still never recovered his spirits.

After the train started we quickly settled down to a regular daily routine life which made the time pass very quickly. I was a guest of the mess and was heralded in to all meals with great pomp by the orderlies, discreetly retiring when we had had our coffee after luncheon and dinner. Between meals everyone was busy in his compartment. Mine had been fitted out by my hosts, who had generously supplied me with silk cushions, cunningly arranged lampshades, and the latest novels, nearly everyone having contributed something. One of these loans was to give us some unexpected amusement. A certain officer had provided me with a beautiful air mattress,

which was to turn my slumbers into untold bliss. It had never been used before. On the very first night that it adorned my bunk I discovered that some experience was needed to tackle it. It had been blown out to its utmost capacity and the bed was about on a level with the bedside table. It was a gymnastic feat to stay on it for any length of time, for it was so elastic that I and all my bedclothes slid off it at every sudden jolt. After several such accidents and vain attempts to loosen the screws in order to let out some of the air, I gave up the idea of spending the night in comfort on my "elastic couch." Remembering some of my Siberian nights I resorted to the floor. As I had plenty of blankets and the train was well heated I comforted myself with the thought that I had known worse.

Next morning I delicately drew the orderly's attention to the fact that the mattress seemed rather hard. When he removed it for the day he assured me that I must have been disappointed by it because it was new. It would improve with time. During the second night, notwithstanding my valiant attempts, I again had to sleep on the floor, the only variation to the preceding night being the fact that finally the mattress lay on top of me! I had slipped off, as usual, when the train gave a lurch and the mattress bounced down, dragging pillows, bedclothes, and all the articles on the table in its wake. My politeness was no longer equal to the strain that was put on it. When the kind owner of the mattress asked me how I had enjoyed my night I had to admit dissatisfaction! General laughter met my tale of woe, and that evening the whole company came to inspect my sleeping arrangements. United efforts undid the screws, the mattress was reduced to normal proportions and proved to be really most comfortable.

I was teased for a long time by questions as to how many men were required to "inflate" my bed, and

visions were conjured up of Tommies bursting with the strain on their lungs. It is needless to say that the brilliant result was achieved in a few minutes with bellows!

From the quarters of the staff came the constant tick, tick of typewriters and the monotonous sound of a voice dictating. I could not bear sitting alone doing nothing. Only constant hard work could keep me level, so I volunteered to help, and after this I had my own work in hours of copying pages of dry stuff, or in translating Red Cross reports from the Russian. This work came as a real godsend, and I really felt as proud as I had done in my schooldays when Major Cameron gave me a curt word of approval as he did to his subalterns.

As I got to know them better my travelling companions would often come and sit in my compartment when their work was done, and I heard many tales of wives and babies at home. I was shown many a photograph of pretty women in evening dress, or of some mite in the early stages of babyhood, with the pathetic comment that he or she must have changed much by now. The poor fellows scarcely dared to speak of the homes that some of them had not seen for many years. Numerous were the confidences I heard and the letters that were read to me, as the only woman of a mentality akin to their own that they had met for so long. When I left there was scarcely one who did not give me a letter or a small gift for his people to take back with me to England. I am glad to think that they, also, returned within the year.

The men all changed for dinner, though of course they remained in regimentals as the train was on war footing. My change of toilet was limited to my feet, which I encased for the evening in my only pair of black silk stockings and tidy shoes, adding a white collar to my one and only black dress. I was in the

care of one of the orderlies, a splendid, tall Royal Artilleryman, who "knew the ways of ladies." My stockings were always laid ready before dinner, most beautifully turned out. He even volunteered to iron the lawn collar and cuffs which did duty for evening dress, and was very much upset when I did not allow him to bring me an early cup of tea! He also considered it his duty to see that all the doors of the other compartments were shut when I went to the bathroom! It contained no bath, but only a kind of douche which sometimes got out of order and played me, literally, a "dirty" trick. On one occasion, having undressed, I pulled the lever, and instantly a very flood of ice-cold water mixed with soot descended on me, instead of the warm shower I had expected. Nothing I could do would stop it! I retired into the farthest corner while my clothes were gradually drenched, but the downpour would not abate. In despair, I donned my soaking raiment and decided to make my exit. Fate was moody that day; the lock of the door had jammed! I pounded violently and heard the welcome voices of the orderlies outside telling me it was "all right." I did not think it was so, though the torrent had by now subsided into a persistent black drizzle. The orderlies rapidly mastered the lock, and I was marched down the corridor, wrapped in a borrowed bathing sheet, so as not to spoil the carpet! After this I left the douche severely alone!

When there was a long stoppage we all rushed out to stretch our legs and enjoy the bright sun, which was already giving considerable warmth and the illusion of approaching spring, though the thermometer still showed −30° R. (−35° F.) in the places where the sun's rays were not felt. There was a Bolshevik scare on the way, and we even had, I believe, a narrow escape. It appeared that a band of well-armed Reds was hiding in the forests about three or four miles from the main

line. If they heard of the approach of the British military train they would certainly try to wreck it, and to take General Knox and his officers prisoners. The Red detachment was said to number some five or six thousand men, and the men of the Hampshire Regiment, acting as escort on board our train, were not numerous. It would have been distinctly unpleasant if it had come to a battle, but as there was some hope that the Bolsheviks did not know the exact schedule of the train it was decided that we were to try to slip past unnoticed. All the head-lights on the engine were put out, as well as all the lights in the carriages. We progressed for a couple of hours in the dark. There was little light inside the train and none without, for, luckily, there was no moon that night.

As usual, three of the officers and I met in General Knox's saloon car after dinner for a quiet game of bridge, "for love." Only two candles were lighted and the dark curtains were drawn carefully. The clicking of the General's typewriter could be heard issuing from his private compartment before he came to "cut in." None of the players seemed in the least perturbed, though orders had been given to have the men roused and the machine-guns got in readiness for a possible surprise. Except for the bad light and the service revolvers worn by my partners, no one would have believed that there was anything unusual in the air. One man remarked casually that he only hoped that with our darkened head-lights we would not bump into some "tomfool" of a freight train on the line, especially as the signal lights on the points were usually unlighted from lack of kerosene! There was a general laugh, but nothing else was said. It was a typically British attitude. The adventure came to nothing after all, for at the next station, past midnight, the chief engineer came in, pale and wiping a perspiring brow, to announce that we had passed the danger zone.

The whole of the journey from Omsk to Vladivostock took fourteen days, on account of the stoppages necessitated by the General's tour of inspection. This enabled me to see a little more of the country than I should have done in simply passing through. From Omsk to Taiga, more than a day's journey, was an uninterrupted expanse of snow steppes, stretching right and left. Beyond Taiga begin the great forests to which that station owes its name. The train runs for about four days without a break through thick, nearly primeval undergrowth, among huge fir trees, their branches heavy with snow, without a single bird or living creature anywhere. It seemed to me the most melancholy country I had ever seen. There is no human habitation except on the outskirts of these forests, which explains how in olden days escaped convicts managed to live in them undetected for months in summer. During the hunting season the trappers go out to camp in the Taiga in pursuit of ermine, sable, and silver foxes. It is lucky for these men that the animals have to be trapped and not shot, so as not to damage the valuable skins, for already in 1919 the trappers could not get any ammunition. In consequence they hardly dared to go deep into the forests, and the wolves and bears became so bold that they were a real danger to the population. Besides evading wild beasts the trappers had to wage a constant and desperate war against the mosquitoes that swarmed in thick clouds. Their size and their persistence and boldness always made them a real plague, and now none of the appliances against them could be obtained any more. It is not to be wondered at that settlers could never be induced to stay long in the Taiga, which in the time of the Imperial Government was already a ground for complaint.

We sometimes passed clearings along the line, with here and there charred tree stumps showing through

the snow shroud. These were the traces of the great wood fires that are often started in summer by a spark from an engine falling on dry undergrowth, and which rage for weeks, destroying miles of forest. It is impossible to put them out, and the progress of the flames can only be arrested by some natural obstacle, a deep ravine, a river, or by a sudden changing of the wind, which causes the fire to die out slowly.

From Taiga our train took us to Tomsk, the greatest Siberian university town, which lies on a side branch off the main line. The majority of the officers accompanied the General to the barracks, while Mr. J., our only civilian, and I started on a voyage of discovery. In parenthesis I must note that the orderlies always seemed to bracket us two together as "specimens apart." Tomsk is at the usual five miles distance from the station—this is the case somehow all over Russia—but we found an *isvozchik* (cabman), who did not treat us with the haughty indifference meted out by most of his kind to their prospective customers, and who agreed to drive us round the town.

He assumed the rôle of a cicerone, and described the scenes he had witnessed during the most acute period of the revolution, while he pointed out the chief landmarks. The town boasted a considerable number of stone edifices and was prettily situated with some hills at the background, and we were shown an imposing block of university buildings. We were told afterwards that many professors had fled and not returned, and that in consequence the number of male students had been greatly reduced, but that as a compensation a great many young Jewesses had availed themselves of the new law admitting women to the universities, and had graduated there.

The population looked with some curiosity at the foreigners, but in general showed neither friendliness nor hostility. The reason of the presence of the Allied

forces was not quite clear to the mind of the common man, but the majority felt them to be a protection against the Bolsheviks and did not investigate the matter further. The British contingent's personal appearance was in their favour, for the Russian peasantry greatly admire a fine man, and are attracted by the look of physical strength. I overheard an amusing illustration of this on my walk, when I met two peasants who were discussing General Knox and his officers, who had just passed them. They were full of admiration. "Fine fellows," they said. "And their General, that is a real man. How tall and strong he is; he could knock a man down like a feather! One immediately sees that he is a person of importance. Why has he come here?" "I do not know," replied the other; "but he is a person of importance most certainly, to judge by his looks, and a *molodchina* [fine fellow] as well as his men. I believe," he added, warming with enthusiasm as he spoke, "that they *all* would be able to knock one down." "But still, *why* have they come here?" persisted the other. "Who knows," replied his friend, with a vague gesture. "But perhaps they are all Generals. Let us cheer them when they return." Which they accordingly did, much to the astonishment of the General, who could not imagine the reason for their sudden burst of enthusiasm.

The sight of a special train caused a great stir at the stations through which we passed. Sentries had to be posted at the door of the General's carriage to avoid the intrusion of the curious, while there were frequent requests for a "lift" for a matter of some five hundred miles or so, which had to be met with refusal. The climax to popular curiosity came when the soldiers started games, which they usually did at some of the longer stops. In a few moments a crowd would collect, gathered apparently from nowhere, as there

were generally only a few hovels to be seen near the station.

It was amusing for all of us to watch the tall, lithe Englishmen darting about, having cast off their coats in the ardour of an exciting football match. Any available object, down to an empty cocoa tin, served as a ball. The peasants gazed open-mouthed, and it was as keen a regret to them as to the players when the game had to be stopped at its most thrilling moment by the engine's whistle giving the signal for departure.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

WE did not pass through any towns of interest till we reached Krasnoyarsk, the great fur-trade centre, which is very prettily situated in the midst of wooded heights, a relief to the eye after all the flat country. Marvellous furs were brought to the train for sale and some of the married men remembered their wives in England. Silver foxes were offered for about £10 to £15 the set, furs that in succeeding years, during the boom in New York, were sold for $1500 to $2000. I regret to say that neither my slim purse nor those of most of my companions allowed us to yield to temptation.

Then came Irkutsk, a day and a half later. This town is at its best in summer, for the Angara which flows through the town is one of the widest rivers of this part of Siberia. Its waters are of a singular transparency and of a wonderful shade of blue, while the current is so rapid that the fishermen do not need to use their oars in going down stream towards the Baikal. They simply let the current do their work.

Irkutsk had suffered much from the recent civil war and severe fighting had taken place. The Bolsheviks had shelled the town with guns mounted on boats lying in the river. The houses along the quay were riddled with bullets, and some of them were

nothing but a mass of ruins. The centre of Irkutsk, which had formerly been the most prosperous and modern part of the town, had been entirely burned down, some inflammable stores having caught fire during the bombardment. Nothing had been repaired owing to the great scarcity of building material, which had to be brought from Japan or China. Great holes still gaped in the walls of many houses and disclosed the gaily papered walls of the rooms inside, and nearly all the windows were mended with brown paper, as glass was not available.

The loss of life had been considerable. Numbers of the pupils of the local cadet school, mere boys, had gallantly laid down their lives fighting on the side of the White Army. It was characteristic of the times that their bodies still lay in a nameless grave where they had fallen before the Governor's house. The Government in power was afraid of provoking political demonstration, which might lead to street fights, should the recent civil war be brought too strongly to mind by an official funeral ceremony. Not far from the Governor's residence stood a monument to the Emperor Alexander III. Curiously enough this had been spared, both by the bullets and by the revolutionary mania for destruction. This was also the case with an ornate landing-stage, farther along the quay, which had been put up by the Town Council on the occasion of the Emperor Nicholas II's only visit to Irkutsk, when he had crossed Siberia as heir to the crown.

It was strange to see these monuments and to know that the people who hurried past them, talking and laughing, scarcely remembered on what occasion and in whose honour the familiar landmarks had been put up. The disappearance of the Monarchy had already become a distant memory. So much had the events that followed it affected each man's private

life that even such a stupendous national event had been forced into the background.

We passed a couple of churches, more interesting than were the generality on account of some old frescoes that were painted on their outer walls. The climate was dealing hardly with them; the plaster was falling off in many places, but the mellowing of their tones caused by the rain and snow beating upon them for years had given these paintings a delicate softness that was very charming.

The brief Siberian day was drawing to its close when we drove back to the train. As the sun disappeared we felt acutely how low the temperature still was. Close to the station I saw some pigeons pecking grain that lay on the ground. They were so much numbed by the cold that they could not fly! They waddled off slowly as I came up. Unable to believe that they could not use their wings I threw my muff at them. Even then they only moved slowly, and one bird remained stationary. It had been drinking some water that had evidently just been spilt: its claws had got into the puddle and were frozen to the ground!

Beyond Irkutsk the line winds in and out of the numerous tunnels of the Trans-Baikal Railway. Here was the finest scenery that I had as yet seen. Owing to the bright moonlight I was able to admire it, and sat up till late, entranced by the view of the immense snow-covered Baikal. Whenever we emerged from a tunnel I saw the lake surrounded by high mountains that rose rugged and dark from its very edge, reminding me of the Norwegian fjords in winter. Towards the horizon the white shimmering plain seemed to merge into the great masses of clouds that in this light assumed weird and fantastic forms. There was something mysterious and enthralling in the picture. Neither bird nor beast dared raise its voice to disturb Nature in

her great winter sleep. Only the shrill whistle of our train broke the spell and echoed in the distance.

The Siberians love their great " Sea," as they call the Baikal, and have a beautiful song about it. This has a haunting tune of much sadness, and its solemn chords are a fitting expression for the picture it evokes.

Next morning we again saw traces of civil war. We passed several battlefields, and as the snow crust was much thinner here, we could distinctly make out the contours of trenches and shell-holes. Débris of all kinds still lay strewn on the ground ; and wrecked carriages lay beside the railway line. A burned-down station building, with heaps of wonderfully twisted rails and rusty wire, was also a legacy of the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks themselves had dispersed, but separate bands were said to be roaming about in the surrounding forests and they still sometimes held up the trains.

We were now approaching Manchuria. The mountains got lower and the country, instead of being an all-white picture, became a yellow one. Sand plains dotted with rocks alternated with sandy hillocks, and snow lay only in the hollows between them. The cold, however, was nearly as intense as in Siberia, for not a tree was anywhere to be seen, and piercing winds swept the barren country. Wretched hovels were dotted about here and there, and the greyish-blue tint that was prevalent in the family washing fluttering in the breeze was repeated in the clothes of the many children we now saw at every station and denoted our approach to the Celestial Empire.

At Chita General Knox was visited by the notorious Ataman Semenoff, who ruled the district and whose Government was then still independent of Kolchak. Semenoff had been the first to call together all the military anti-Bolshevik elements, but on the strength of this arrogated to himself the rights of a chieftain of

the Middle Ages, levied taxes on all who passed Chita, and extended his rule far into Manchuria.

I saw him entering the train, a tall man, with a commanding manner, wearing Cossack uniform. He was accompanied by a retinue of officers, among whom, for some unknown reason, was a priest. They all talked loudly and authoritatively to the English staff officers while their chief was closeted with General Knox. They were doubtless brave men, but seemingly lacked both discipline and tact, to judge by their behaviour on this occasion. They could not hope to gain any sympathies by their manner, and their outward appearance largely corroborated all the tales that were repeated of the riotous living at Chita. I could not believe that such men could ever hope to become a stable power.

At the first Manchurian station we tried to shop, but this proved a hopeless undertaking. In the course of a few minutes we were surrounded by hosts of Chinese of every age and description, thrusting their wares upon us. Not many knew even a few words of pidgin English, but they chattered volubly, pushing their goods under our very noses, plucking at our sleeves to make their appeals more forcible, and repeating "Khorosso, Khorosso" (good), in broken Russian. They sold silks for the most part, some very ugly bright ones which were depraved copies of European stuffs and designs, and others which were evidently manufactured for their own use and were delightful in colouring and texture but very narrow in width. The difficulty was to ascertain their real prices, for not one of us could speak Chinese, and the vendors did not seem to understand either Russian or English numerals. They were so persistent, however, that we finally marched off with various silks thrust on us, devoutly hoping that we had not cheated our uncomprehending Chinese, who seemed inconsolable at the

thought of our going away empty-handed, and who showed us by gesture the sacrifice they were making in our favour. I only hope that their commercial sense did not desert them in their desire to deal with such distinguished customers!

At this time the line in Manchuria was guarded by Japanese soldiers. The Japanese Government had sent troops as had the other Allies, but had kept their men strictly within the precincts of the Manchurian frontier. At every station we saw them, neat and dapper in their field uniforms, a small, alert officer with white cotton gloves always coming up to meet the train. Harbin was not under their control, but was ruled by the civil administration of the Manchurian Railway, and General Horvat, its head, was the supreme authority in the Russian part of the town, the Chinese having their own administration in their half of Harbin.

The Chinese town was said to be interesting, and as we were to stop there for nearly a day we decided to go sightseeing. Even at the station we seemed to see representatives of all the populations of the East in the crowd that shouted and jostled each other to the trains that were to take them to Vladivostock, Siberia, and China. Here were rich Chinamen in fine furs, less opulent members of the nation in long, skin-tight, black satin garments, wearing the old-fashioned small black Chinese skull-cap with a coloured knob on the top to indicate the wearer's rank. Here were Chinese soldiers, dirty and untidily dressed, ill at ease in their new, badly cut uniforms and suffering torture in European leather boots. Further we met country people wearing many layers of clothes, and lastly beggars, crowds of beggars of that persistent quality of which the Orient has the speciality, and from whom our Siberian beggars could still find much to learn!

Among the mixed crowd of Chinese and of North

Siberian tribesmen we saw well-dressed Russians walking about, for the Bolsheviks had never had a hold on Harbin, and few of the poorer refugees had penetrated so far. Harbin was in 1919 nearly unchanged from pre-war days.

Some rather dilapidated rickshaws and one or two cabs were waiting for customers at the station. I had, as yet, not got over the feeling of aversion from being dragged by a human being, so we selected a local Chinese cab for our tour. Having made our intentions known to the driver by signs, we started off. Our jogging conveyance was a kind of small victoria, drawn by two shaggy Mongolian ponies that did not keep step, one trotting while the other started off at a canter. We crossed the long bridge over the railway lines which connects the European town with the Chinese. From the glimpses we had of it we saw that the first was like the usual Siberian town, with nothing distinctly Manchurian in it. On getting further away from the centre, however, the buildings became gradually smaller, the streets narrower and more crowded. We met with fewer Europeans, and at last we reached real Chinaland. It so happened that this was the time of the Chinese New Year, a festivity which the Celestials keep for several days. The manifestations of their joy were of a somewhat noisy nature. Tom-toms were beaten, and the piercing screech of some kind of native pipe was heard on every side. The unmusical public took part in the general rejoicing by pulling crackers and shooting signal rockets. Brightly painted shop signs fluttered in the sun, but all the shops were closed except those that sold foodstuffs, which was a sad disappointment to us.

The food dealers apparently drove a roaring trade, for inside the shops, the doors of which were wide open, we saw crowds of Chinese and heard them jabbering in their unmusical language. Evidently the

haggling, without which no single deal is made in that country, was proceeding in full swing. It is etiquette and a pleasant pastime for both the salesman and the client. From what we saw exhibited in the numerous open-air booths, none of the delicacies would be tempting to a European palate. There were candied carrots, curious bright red berries strung on sticks, and dark wet apples swimming in some sticky liquid of an indefinite hue. From the roofs swung dried fish of various shapes and strong and unattractive odours. In fact, the smell of a Chinese quarter is its principal drawback, and the whiffs that escaped from the houses and were wafted to our nostrils were strong and pervading. Old Chinamen, crouched on the ground, were frying whitish, thick round cakes in castor oil on little iron braziers. Stolid, narrow-eyed, dirty-faced children, all in clothes of varying stages of raggedness, swarmed around them, eyeing the dainties with longing eyes.

The Chinese did not seem to have taken any special care of their toilet in honour of the feast. Except for an occasional man or woman in brighter raiment they all wore layers of wadded coats. The noise in the streets was deafening. The beat of the tom-toms tried to drown every other sound, and issued with clanging persistence from the open doors of numerous tea-houses. Our conveyance could proceed only with the greatest difficulty, as the narrow streets were crowded with bullock-carts of every description as well as with pedestrians and street vendors. Some of the vehicles were inordinately long, two-wheeled wooden carts that blocked the whole street when they turned. There were also the local carriages called *fountounkas*, and rickshaws of every description. No one kept to any definite direction, and to steer our way at all was not an easy matter.

Suddenly, in turning a corner, we heard a

recrudescence of sounds, a wilder noise of tom-toms and flourish of pipes and penny drums. Down the street came a procession carrying paper lanterns and all kinds of flags decorated with signs. This was the great New Year procession. Blue-coated men headed it, carrying a huge, many-coloured paper dragon high over the people's heads. Rockets were exploding right and left, terrifying even our mild little horses that reared and neighed. Children danced about, trying to catch the dainties that their elders threw them. It was pandemonium indeed when all the people in the tea-houses rushed out to join the followers of the dragon, bringing their own musical instruments to swell the medley of sound.

It was impossible to move in the street after this. Though we saw in the distance the entrance to a temple which we had hoped to visit, it was quite useless even to attempt to enter on such a festive day. We felt, too, that the time for our train's departure must be near, and we decided to return. This proved to be no easy matter. Our Jehu did not understand a single word even of pidgin English, and did not seem to realise that we wanted to get back to the station. He persisted in driving on and on into the mazes of the Chinese town, the one-storied houses of which seemed to stretch on endlessly. The streets were so narrow and the houses so close together and so much alike that we found no landmarks to guide us. There was not a single passer-by to whom we could turn for help, for no one could understand a word we said. We began to notice hostile looks and were beginning to think, anxiously, that we would never get back to the train in time and would be left behind when I saw in the distance the glittering cupolas of the Russian church which I had noticed on coming from the station. This was our beacon of salvation, and by much gesticulation we managed

to make our Chinaman take us in that direction. When we reached the station we found the train waiting for us, and the relief felt at our reappearance prevented the scolding which was, I fear, in the air.

On the morrow we reached Vladivostock, the last point of my Siberian journey. I saw the rocky Pacific coast for the first time, and thought how lovely was the town's situation with the wide expanse of the ocean beating against the rocks, but found later that a total lack of vegetation robs it of any charm. Vladivostock seemed built in a haphazard manner, without any consideration for the effect the buildings might produce. It was so new as to be quite uninteresting. As one of the Englishmen said to me, "God Almighty did His best when He made this coast, but man has done nothing to it since."

It was strange and sad to me to see the lack of life in the harbour of what had formerly been a prosperous commercial port and one of the great naval bases of Russia. All was changed. There were only a few Japanese steamers in the commercial harbour and three or four old Russian destroyers anchored in the military one. The small cruiser *Kent*, Wolfe Murray's ship, lying in the centre, was the largest vessel to be seen.

Vladivostock, being the base of the Allied forces, was full of foreigners. There was the military element as well as representatives of the various Red Cross units, some Canadian detachments that had never gone any farther, as well as civilians and diplomats. There were Siberians, too, who had come East during the early stages of the revolutionary movement and who had still managed to keep some of their possessions. On that account the hotels were over-filled, and General Knox invited me to stay at his house till my boat sailed. Captain Cazalet and General Blair were the other inmates, and all three were admirable hosts.

Among the people I met at Vladivostock I noticed a perceptible difference from those I had seen at Omsk. The realities of the political situation had been toned down here, and many, even Russians, had lulled themselves into a kind of fictitious optimism. The foreigners who had not been to Omsk did not, I thought, quite grasp the real state of affairs. The whole of Vladivostock life was artificial: there were parties, there was even dancing, and great talk of triumphant campaigns in the spring. Under the surface disaffection was smouldering, while Siberia was preparing for the overthrow of the Kolchak regime and the reinstatement of Bolshevism.

All my travelling companions came to see me off when, under the escort of Captain Coussmaker, I embarked on a Japanese steamer for Tsuruga.

It is certainly owing to the fact of having been able to leave Siberia when I did that I escaped falling again under Bolshevik rule. I feel the greatest gratitude to General Knox for this, but more still for all the warm sympathy and genuine kindness shown to me by him and his staff. I felt that I was parting from real friends when I said good-bye to them—they had been so wonderfully good to me and so full of tact and understanding.

It was a poignant moment when I saw the Russian coast fading away behind me while our steamer ploughed its way amidst the floating ice of Amur Bay. (This was the middle of February.)

I was leaving Russia. Would I ever see my country again, and in what condition would I find it if I ever returned? Who among my friends and relations would have survived the storm? The Russia I had known, the old Russia, disappeared slowly from view.

EPILOGUE

A GREY country stretched before my eyes as we neared Tsuruga. The whole picture looked like an etching in soft half-shades of grey and sepia. The same impression was continued in the view of the landscape that I saw from the train, one of those small Japanese trains that make Europeans feel like grown-up people playing in a child's toy. The grey tones merged into grey-green as we passed the tree plantations, and into grey-blue when the line wound round the sacred Fujiyama. I could not keep my eyes from the window then—the picture I saw had so great a charm and was so totally unlike anything I had ever imagined.

At Tokio station was a crowd of pressmen armed with cameras and awful flash-lights, and in front of them, dodging them carefully, stood Lady Lily Greene, the British Ambassador's wife, a great friend of my mother's. Sir Conyngham and Lady Lily's warm welcome marked the beginning of a new era for me and the return to normal life. In the haven of rest which the British Embassy proved to me, I found myself surrounded by the understanding kindness of true friends, and under Lady Lily's motherly care gradually regained my mental equilibrium.

My days there were only too short. I managed to evade the Japanese reporters, for I could not as yet bring myself to speak of the experiences of the last two years. This did not prevent numerous articles

from appearing in the many papers of Japan in which my arrival was described and in one of which I received the highest possible compliment, being credited with "the true, fine Japanese type of face." It must have been the flash-light photograph that led to this delusion!!

I was so eager to return to Europe that I was able to see very little of the fascinating Land of the Rising Sun. Nor was I able to get more than a glimpse of Honolulu, San Francisco, and other towns of the United States through which I hurried. Everything in America seemed to me on such a monumental scale that it dwarfed every bit of European scenery I had ever seen before, or have ever seen since. What were the Norwegian fjords, or even the Alps, after the Rocky Mountains? What are the largest buildings of other towns after those in San Francisco and New York? While after the leisured trend of everything in Siberia everyone in America seemed to be continually hurrying at the topmost speed and to be putting into twenty-four hours the work of forty-eight!

The journey seemed interminable to my impatient mind, but when I at last reached England I had in fact travelled as fast as the mail. I found echoes of the World War in the Atlantic, the War which I had nearly forgotten, ever present though it had been to my mind in the Tsarskoe Selo Palace. The events in my own country had driven it into the background. Here, however, was lifeboat practice, and careful manœuvring to avoid possible floating mines near the English coast.

In London I was told that the Dowager Empress Marie of Russia, whom I hoped to join in the Crimea, had had to leave precipitately on a British man-of-war, as the Bolsheviks were about to recapture the peninsula. She was, in fact, on her way to England, but as Her Majesty was going later to her villa in Denmark

I went straight to Copenhagen to see my father, whom I had not seen since 1917, and to await the arrival of the Empress.

Once again in my life I was to see the state arrival of a Russian Empress, when Marie Feodorovna, mother of the Emperor Nicholas II, was welcomed home to Denmark by her countrymen. In the summer of 1919 she returned, an exile, to her native land, having by a wonderful series of circumstances escaped the fate that overtook her dear ones, and undergone trials and borne sorrows almost too great for any mortal to endure.

As the Danish ship *Fionia*, with the Empress on board, steamed slowly into Copenhagen Harbour between the surrounding ships, the solemn strains of the old Russian National Anthem, "God Preserve the Tsar," suddenly broke the stillness of the air. It was played by the band of a French battleship that thus greeted the aged mother of their ally. As the majestic chords died away an acute, almost unbearable pain gripped the hearts of all the Russians who had gathered on the landing-stage to meet their last crowned Empress. Was this to be the last time that they would hear that hymn? The Empire had been wiped out, the Emperor was no more, our great country had lost even its name. In the notes of our anthem was the echo of one of the world's greatest tragedies. It seemed to set a seal on a past that for us was gone . . . gone for ever.

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